

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUALITY AND ETHICS
IN THE WORK OF ARTHUR KOESTLER, 1937-1959

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Ph D
The University of Edinburgh
1997



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must begin by thanking my two supervisors, Professor Duncan Forrester and Dr John Beloff, for their generous encouragement and advice, particularly in the early stages of my research when their timely words prevented my exploring more than one blind alley. Indeed, my debt to Dr John Beloff is incalculable, as not only has he provided first-hand information on Koestler as friend and fellow researcher in parapsychology, but he was also responsible many years ago for introducing me as a psychology undergraduate to Koestler's work.

Professor Michael Scammell of Columbia University has, at times, almost been a third supervisor and has graciously shared the fruit of his own research. His long-awaited and definitive biography of Arthur Koestler will correct the biographical errors of which I am still, in spite of his best efforts, guilty.

This thesis would not have been possible without the patient assistance of the staff of the University of Edinburgh Library's Special Collections Department, and in particular Miss Jean Archibald. I also appreciated the co-operation of Ms Gillian Furlong and the staff of University College London's Orwell Archive on my visit there. Captain A. B. Sainsbury, RNR, Archivist Trustee, Richard Hillary Trust, Trinity College, Oxford, also proved a great help in the latter stages.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many individuals who have contributed in some way to the final work. In particular, I would like to thank Mr Tom Bower, Professor Peter Davison, Professor Bob Morris, Ms Jenni Calder, Sir Michael Howard and those staff and students of Edinburgh University's Faculty of Divinity who offered particular insights or comments. M. Phil Casoar provided much useful information about Koestler's pre-war work; the Very Reverend Professor Tom Torrance, Michael Polanyi's literary executor, kindly supplied me with various contacts, as well as his own opinions, as I sought to compare Koestler with Polanyi. I am only sorry that, for the moment, much of the data have had to be put to one side.

I am pleased to acknowledge the financial support of the Jerusalem Trust and the Church of Scotland Ministers' Scholarship Scheme, and the encouragement of the Presbytery of Perth for allowing me the time necessary to begin my studies. The genuine interest and continual support of the Reverend Ron Greig and the Presbytery of Perth Ministry Committee deserve mention; the Study Leave Scheme the Presbytery has initiated, and the national scheme by which it will soon be replaced, can only be of benefit to the Church of Scotland. Dr Jeremy Moiser and Professor Jimmy Knox also gave much-needed practical help in proof-reading the manuscript.

I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Jean, and daughter, Catriona. Jean has not only endured the ghostly presence of Arthur Koestler in the manse over four years but given me more than could reasonably be expected by way of encouragement and support. Catriona has ensured Koestler could never quite take over my life; nevertheless, an apology is due for those occasions when *Darkness at Noon* took unfair precedence over reading aloud *Spot Bakes a Cake*.

I hereby declare that the composition of this thesis
and the research on which it is based is my own work.

Michael J. Ward
5 September 1997

THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of Arthur Koestler's spirituality and ethics, from the publication of *The Gladiators* in 1939 to *The Sleepwalkers* twenty years later, drawing upon the extensive material within Edinburgh's Koestler Archive.

Where his work has often been divided into "political" and "scientific" phases, this thesis adopts a unified approach based on the single hierarchical system that arose from Koestler's analysis of human freedom. The ethical trilogy - *The Gladiators*, *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure* - revealed Koestler's continuing abhorrence of the deterministic philosophy he had espoused within the Communist Party. After his abandonment of revolutionary ethics, Koestler proposed an ethical hierarchy to understand the allegorical figures of his eponymous essay, *The Yogi and the Commissar*.

Arthur Koestler viewed society as constantly shifting between the polar opposites of Yogi and Commissar. Hierarchical ethics sought to transcend both poles. What emerged was a more optimistic, life-enhancing ethic than has hitherto been acknowledged. The work of Richard Hillary, George Orwell and Michael Polanyi enabled Koestler to refine his theory, the outcome of which was evident in the 1946 League and the anti-hanging campaign a decade later.

In his scientific writing, Koestler sought to understand the movement of individuals within the hierarchy. If scientific models could be utilised to explain moral and creative insight, he also became convinced, earlier than one might suppose, that the evolution of the human brain was the cause behind the failure of the species to ascend the ethical hierarchy.

Biological factors alone do not account for the irrational ethic that survives Koestler's dystopic vision. The thesis presents evidence that this ethical system contains an essential spiritual element traceable to its author's mystical experience whilst imprisoned in Seville. Thus the principle underlying his work and aspirations for humankind, post-Hiroshima, is of a spiritual reality, the admission of which is necessary before a holistic working ethic can be embraced.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethics and spirituality

The focus of this thesis is the development of ethics and spirituality in the work of one particular writer of the present century. *Ethics*, according to one dictionary definition, is the science of morals, that branch of philosophy which is concerned with human character and conduct. The term *spirituality*, on the other hand, was first used by the eighteenth century Jesuit Giovanni Scaramelli to refer to the science of spiritual life, involving "the relationship between the whole person and a holy God" (Albin 1988) and thus has a vertical dimension to it not necessarily possessed or required by the ethicist¹.

"Both morality and religion refer to certain attitudes, types of awareness, belief and behaviour that arise from the discernment of certain *values* and that are expressed or embodied in certain beliefs and behaviour that are deemed to be appropriate responses to the values discerned." (Hicks 1996: 23)

If we substitute *ethics* and *spirituality* for "morality and religion" - with the caveat that *spirituality* may go beyond the myopic vision limited to one's own religious tradition - then we have at least arrived at a working definition for the kind of ethics and spirituality that concerned Koestler. For Koestler approached ethics from the standpoint not of an academic but of a true-life revolutionary: one whose attitudes and behaviour arose from the first-hand discernment of the beliefs and behaviour of his years as a Communist and, as I hope to demonstrate, in particular his time in prison in Seville during the Spanish Civil War. *Revolutionary ethics*, the subject of the first

¹In a recent article, David Hicks raised the question as to whether or not morality depends upon religion (Hicks 1996). It is clear from Hicks' own answer that spirituality, like morality, "has to do with the discernment of and response to a being or beings of worth" (Hicks 1996: 24). There is what he calls "the inner spiritual dimension to morality" that is common to all religions. It is important thus to make clear at the outset that "spirituality" as I shall apply the term to Koestler does not necessarily contain a Christian import, yet nevertheless directly influenced his moral thinking.

chapter of this thesis, was simply the means of changing the world in which we live. Originally Koestler equated this with Stalinism but soon saw parallels in other ages to the world in which he lived. And although, as I hope to demonstrate, revolutionary ethics was substituted by other, admittedly less well-defined, ethical systems in Koestler's later writing, nevertheless Koestler remained first and foremost an observer of twentieth-century humanity with a desire to offer pragmatic solutions. The question to Koestler, certainly as his theory of the biological flaw in humanity came to the fore in later years, was one of how to avoid man's self-destruction.

Koestler the sceptical humanist

By introducing the term *spirituality* into a thesis upon Arthur Koestler, I am acutely aware that I am, to a certain extent, going against the conventional view of Koestler the humanist.

Such a view usually takes as its starting-point what Rees refers to as "the history of a loss of faith" (Rees 1975: 110): Koestler's disillusionment and resignation from the Communist Party. Fyvel reminds us that after his break with Stalinism, Koestler found no real new political position (Fyvel 1975: 160), a point first noted by George Orwell. He retained, in the writing of many of his critics and friends, the epithet "ex-Communist". And of course his own writing further accentuates a humanist philosophy, whether it is in his metaphor of a man pulling himself out of the bog in the manner of his boyhood hero, Baron Munchausen, or in his assertion in *The Trail of the Dinosaur* "we shall either destroy ourselves or take off to the stars" (Koestler 1955: 252). It is impossible, he had said in the same essay, to turn back to the language and symbols of a past religious age. God was no longer present in man's world: a premise that formed the background to one of his novels, *The Age of Longing*.

The view of the ex-Communist is best summed up by an early biographer, John Atkins:

"In his heart Koestler remains a Communist, but his Communism is the pristine variety of the theorists, not the dirtied sample displayed by Soviet Russia. The fact that Koestler no longer

calls himself a Communist [in 1956] does not invalidate this view...The Yogi has complicated the vision unbearably." (Atkins 1956: 42-43)

But one could profitably compare Atkins' description to Koestler's own summary of his philosophical progression, mapped out in an extensive note for *The Invisible Writing* that was not used in the published autobiography. Here, he lists the well-known "external" circumstances of his life "Vienna, University...Berlin 30-32 - Russia - Paris exile - Spain...France+England - Post war" with a revealing "internal" parallel development (Figure 1). The "internal" progression begins with Religion, and is superseded by a breathless and bewildering list of "-isms" (including "constructive Zionism, dialectical materialism, avant-garde leftism and bureaucratic leftism"!) culminating in "sceptical humanism". At the very least, the existence of this important manuscript note reveals that Koestler perceived himself as a *sceptical humanist*.

It is my contention that such apparent restlessness and dissatisfaction with humanism is evidence of Koestler's *spirituality*, and that only by seeing Koestler in this light does the continued and single thread of his works become apparent.

A unified approach

Selective approaches to Koestler's work have dominated in recent years, following Harris' *Festschrift* to mark Koestler's seventieth birthday (Harris (ed) 1975). Allowing different essayists to analyse Koestler's work, each according to his or her own speciality, seemed to be the only solution available to Harris to define Koestler's work. Few, if any, critics would claim a mastery of quantum physics, psychology and Middle Eastern politics, let alone have the ability to write accomplished novels: yet these apparently incompatible disciplines were mastered in some degree by Koestler in the space of fifty years. Harris admits to the limitations of his anthology.

"This volume, then, is not an attempt to encompass Koestler within one pair of covers. Any such project would be doomed to failure, for he has crossed too many frontiers, explored too many territories, left his imprint on too many maps for this to be

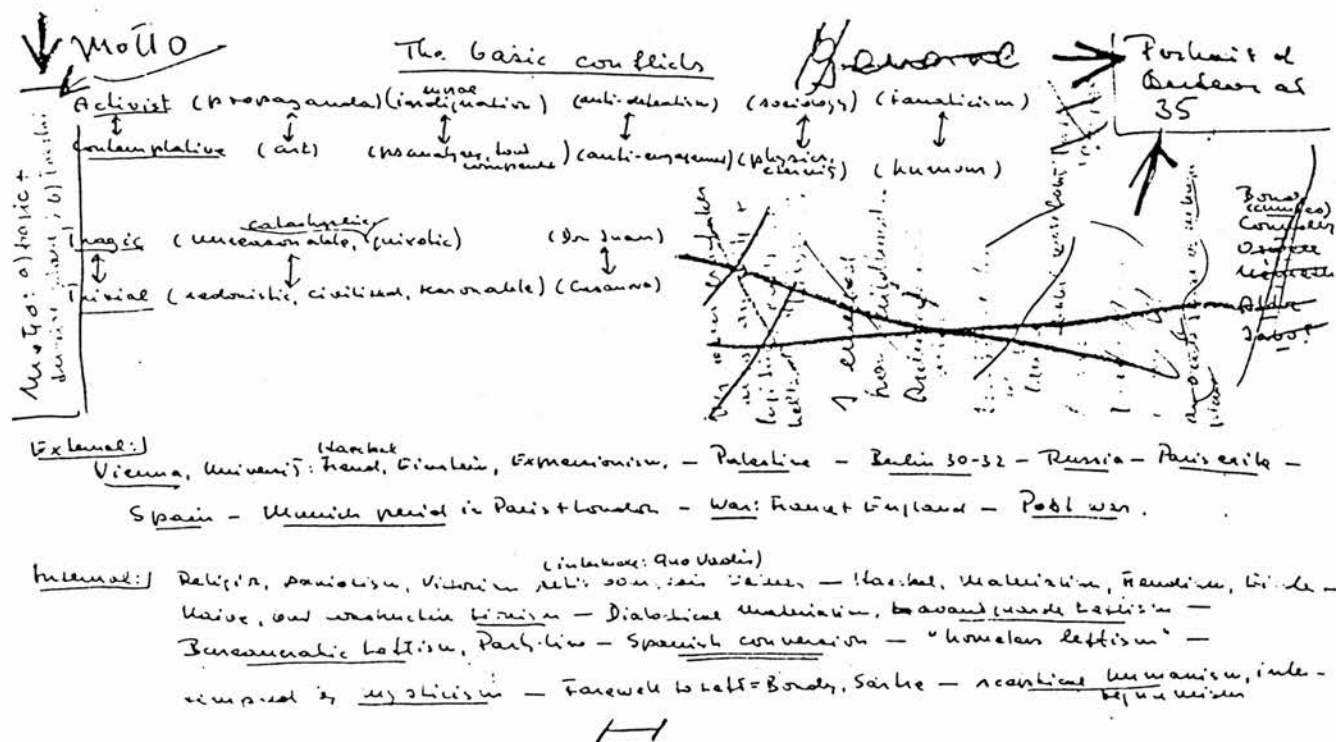


Figure 1. Koestler's unpublished notes for *The Invisible Writing* in which he parallels the "external" events of his life with "internal" changes to his philosophy. (MS2342/3)

remotely possible." (Harris (ed) 1975: xiii)

Harris' approach thus allowed a biologist to evaluate Koestler's contribution to biological thought (Thorpe 1975), a political journalist to consider Koestler's impact upon anti-capital punishment campaigns (Grigg 1975), a parapsychologist to explore his interest in the paranormal (Haynes 1975) and so forth.

A similar approach was adopted more recently by Sperber (Sperber (ed) 1977), although Sperber still tends to treat Koestler's political contributions as of primary importance.

Harris was prepared to accept that within the different facets of Koestler's writing, a broader and more unified picture begins to emerge. The novels referred to above were only one part of his written output which range from autobiography and novel to political essay and scientific thesis. Readers of Harris' anthology will discern not simply a diversity of subject but an author who "persistently and patiently pursued the same truth" (Harris (ed) 1975: xiv) from his childhood quasi-mystical experiences onward.

Rees (Rees 1975), for example, notes that the 'Grammatical Fiction'², the existence of which the Communist Party could not accept, is central to Koestler's opposition of deterministic philosophy in later years. And Webberley's "attempt at an overview", whilst recognising that Koestler's breadth of vision is seen as a disadvantage in any attempt at a critical synthesis of Koestler's work, also argues the case for a more unified approach. "Koestler is often discussed as if he were two writers rather than one", the literary writer of *Darkness...* and the scientist of the *Janus* trilogy (Webberley 1975: 2). One could argue that Koestler, to some extent, asked for such an approach with his "vocational change" plea in the Preface to *The Trail Of The Dinosaur* (Koestler 1955); but such a plea must, forty years later, be set into the context of his later work in assessing to what extent Koestler did indeed change vocation.

Webberley's thesis suggests that connecting the different categories

²The term is an important expression of Koestler's ethical philosophy and is used to help explain Rubashov's "confession" in *Darkness at Noon*. (See Chapter 1 for a full discussion.)

of Koestler's output is a hierarchical system in which freedom is the key issue. The novels merely put the problem of freedom in a concrete but increasingly philosophical and psychological world inhabited by what is, to one degree or another, Koestler himself. The issue of freedom is then taken up in *The Yogi and the Commissar*, a much underrated series of essays in Webberley's opinion, from which the fundamental notion of hierarchy emerges.

I have taken Webberley's model as the starting-point for a critical analysis of Koestler's contribution to ethics, which Koestler himself suggested would emerge in due course from his theory of the holon. Thus, the novels, of which *Darkness at Noon* was the second, are staging posts towards a fully developed ethical theory.

Nevertheless, Webberley's synthesis of Koestler's work does not, indeed cannot, in so few pages go far enough. Firstly, Koestler never did write the promised sequel to *Insight and Outlook* in which the threads of the hierarchy would be drawn together and a properly articulated ethical theory spelt out.

"In the preface [to *Insight and Outlook*] I had promised the reader a second volume 'which is in preparation and will, it is hoped, appear twelve months after the first'. But all I had to show for volume II was a chaotic jumble of notes, the mere sight of which gave me indigestion. After a hopeless struggle I had to shelve volume II 'for the time being'. In actual fact, it never saw the light of day. Its place was taken by *The Act of Creation*, published fifteen years later." (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 50)

The Act of Creation will disappoint readers who hope to find the definitive statement of the hierarchy. There is no fully developed ethical theory as such, though one can be in no doubt from Koestler's later postscripts in the Danube edition to his work and in his interviews with the late Iain Hamilton that he had such a theory in mind, even if on paper it was merely "a chaotic jumble of notes". Thus, my own approach can be defined as an attempt to define Koestler's ethical system, from its genesis in the ethical novels to the scientific work of later life, and to analyse the features that made his ethical system unique.

Recent developments and literature

To adopt a unified approach to the whole of Koestler's work is not in itself new: the biographies of Atkins and, more recently, Iain Hamilton (Hamilton 1982) and Carlet's 1963 unpublished thesis (MS 2435/4), have attempted to show the philosophical consistency running throughout Koestler's writings. In a sense, their relative failure merely reflects the age in which they were written: Atkins was focusing on Koestler's life midstream, and invariably political issues dominate; Hamilton - whose final work Koestler came close to attempting to suppress (MS 2370) - had only limited access to Koestler's papers; and Carlet is more concerned with the psychological roots of Koestler's work rather than its philosophical implications. And, of course, they all shared in common the overriding fact that their subject was very much alive.

Koestler's suicide on 1 March 1983, with that of his third wife Cynthia, has inevitably altered the landscape for Koestlerian scholars.

In the first place, it demonstrates that even in his final act, there is a thread of Koestler's anti-deterministic philosophy still discernible that one can trace directly back to the ethical novels. I venture to suggest that a unified approach to Koestler, and more serious consideration to his ethical system, becomes almost necessary in the aftermath of Koestler's premeditated decision (that clearly dates to June 1982) to take his own life. Harris (in Koestler. A. & C. 1984: 10) may be right in thinking that as vice-president of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, the suicide of a man terminally ill with leukaemia and suffering from Parkinson's disease was not unexpected. Not everyone would agree; and, in any case, the *double* suicide itself raises questions, as many recognised at the time³. The impact was certainly felt upon Mark Levene:

"When Koestler died, the shock was tremendous, unexpected. People who had discounted his scientific work, who, when they thought of him at all, saw him as an anomalous figure - a believer in an age of metaphysical and literary buffoonery - suddenly recalled the moment when they finished reading *Darkness at Noon*, when their entire sense of politics was "riddled with light". In March 1983 they felt the unique loss that comes only with the passing of an

³See Mikes 1986; the insinuation that Arthur was somehow responsible for Cynthia's suicide has been aired again by Avishai (Avishai 1997).

age and an individual in whom it was most sharply lived." (Levene 1985: 32)

Death has a remarkable propensity to shift the focus on to the subject's achievements; and in Koestler's suicide, the *manner* of his death the more so.

Secondly, and indirectly, his death led to the foundation of the Koestler Archive at the University of Edinburgh, an event that in itself clearly transforms the whole arena of Koestlerian scholarship⁴.

The result is that the primary handicap that frustrated Hamilton - namely, the limited access to Koestler's wealth of published and unpublished material - is now lifted, enabling researchers to gain a more complete and certainly more accurate overview of Koestler than hitherto possible.

Two theses in particular have been undertaken to date using the Koestler Archive as their primary source. Both attempt to follow Webberley's example and offer a single theory by which to understand Koestler's writing, though Tyndall, as her title suggests - *The Personal Becomes Political: Arthur Koestler, 1940-1950* - restricts herself to the productive novel-writing years of Koestler's life.

Tyndall's theory (Tyndall 1992) is that Koestler's "personal agenda" (Tyndall 1992: v) shaped his political action during this decade. In particular, she traces Koestler's rejection of Communism to his upbringing as a "Germanized-Hungarian Jew" and subsequent search for a quasi-religious solution to the predicament of man in the twentieth century. The deep sense of resentment that followed his rejection of Communism then resulted, in Tyndall's thesis, to Koestler shaping, through his writings, an image of the Soviet Union as the "evil empire".

⁴Details of this development vary (University of Edinburgh 1987: introduction; Beloff 1993) but, relying on Beloff's account as one of the Estate's executors, it appears that Koestler had specified that his entire estate be used to provide a Chair of Parapsychology at any *British university* willing to accept such a challenge. Edinburgh was the most willing of several interested universities and hence the executors agreed to bestow on it the Koestler Chair (Beloff 1993: 280). The Archive came to Edinburgh soon afterwards, with the assistance of Koestler's literary executor, the late Harold Harris, and London Library, to which Koestler had initially left his books.

Goldstein's thesis also alights upon Koestler's Jewish background (Goldstein 1992) but her title - *Arthur Koestler: A European Intellectual Of The Twentieth Century* - places his work into that generation of European intellectuals "born between the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, whose lives were shaped by the relentless criticism of traditional faith and values that eroded secure standards" (Goldstein 1992: 2). Koestler belonged to a specific sub-group of central-European Jewish intelligentsia that inherited an equally specific romantic and messianic concept of history. Goldstein attempts to place Koestler's life and thought as a response to these two stimuli: the changes in Europe and his own cultural messianic concept of history.

The use and limitations of biography and novel

Carlet, Goldstein and Tyndall share the belief that the roots for Koestler's work lie in his background. But it is surely the case that a psychological analysis of *why* Koestler wrote what he did does not preclude a study that properly categorises *what* he wrote, regardless of the reasons for his writing.

However, Tyndall and Goldstein have shown the value of biographical material in understanding the evolution of Koestler's ideas. One can, for example, cite various points at which Koestler's writing was a direct result of his recent life - *Spanish Testament* and part of *Darkness at Noon* are obvious examples - and the Archive, above all, assists research in the correspondence and diary notes it contains, thus affording us insights into Koestler's mind that no prior researcher has enjoyed⁵.

⁵Indeed, the Archive is frequently the *only* source for important and hitherto unpublished information, such as the manuscript to the sequel for *Arrival and Departure*, which, as far as I can ascertain, must rank as a discovery as a literary piece that can only now be added to the Koestler canon, and the various manuscripts for *Dr Icarus*. Koestler would frequently be working on a project years before it reached its fruition, and the discovery of so-called "scientific" theories sketched out in 1952 that were only published in the *Janus* trilogy twelve years later is further warning of the hazards of using only Koestler's published research as source material.

It is also possible to trace the development of Koestler's spirituality and ethics through his works of fiction. Certainly Pritchett, for example, treated *Arrival and Departure* as a total expression of Koestler's political thought. Atkins offers a useful warning against such an approach in the field of fiction.

"I believe that a novelist should be given the benefit of the doubt when he writes of characters such as Peter and Nikitin [in *The Age of Longing*], even if one of them serves as the leading character...Similarly it is erroneous to view the particular theme of a novel as expressing the favoured conception of its author. He may be warning or merely commenting." (Atkins 1956: 81-82)

Creative writers distance themselves from their characters. And it is most certainly the case that *The Age of Longing* and, to a lesser extent, *Twilight Bar* are the anti-utopian visions conjured up by a creative writer to serve as a warning against a totalitarian - and I shall, argue, a humanist - view that its author saw as a threat to the very existence of the planet, rather than a means of expressing "the favoured conception" of its author.

Atkins' note of caution is equally applicable to Koestler's first novel, *The Gladiators*, seen by many (not least Orwell) as evidence of Koestler's Utopian streak. "Koestler in sandals" never quite rings true of Spartacus; we are on safer ground if we view this novel, and those that followed, as expressions of Koestler's ethical progression, in Hicks' terms commenting upon the values of society as he discerned them and evaluating whether or not such attitudes and behaviour as displayed by his fictional characters were "appropriate responses to the values discerned". Thus, I hope to demonstrate that the novels outline Koestler's dissatisfaction with the prevailing ethic and his own struggle towards a less avowedly humanist ethic that might usefully replace what he termed Commissar-ethics.

The concept of a spiritual ethic

Whilst Tyndall and Goldstein place Koestler within a certain literary or cultural context, neither see fit to draw attention to the significant periods in which Koestler collaborated with others, often

with dramatic results (the anti-hanging campaign of 1956 being a prime case in point) and always with a concomitant development in his own ethical thinking. Koestler was clearly not the only ethicist of merit in Britain in the post-war years; it has been necessary, therefore, to highlight the contributions made by other writers in Koestler's ethical development, notably Richard Hillary, George Orwell and Michael Polanyi.

Calder has already noted the similarities between Orwell and Koestler whilst curiously failing to grasp the existence, let alone the significance, of the Orwell-Koestler project of 1946. Attributions of authorship between two partners are difficult to answer, even after scrutinising the papers in two Archives - Koestler having been instrumental in setting up the Orwell Archive in University College London Library some years earlier. Nevertheless, such a collaboration has an important role to play in establishing the precise nature of Koestler's practical ethics. I shall use the evidence from such short but crucial periods of collaboration (the nature of which was usually unacknowledged by Koestler) to map the disillusionment that took Koestler away from revolutionary ethics towards the concept of the holon.

Koestler's use of Hillary's material - some would say misuse - appears to have been a deliberate ploy on Koestler's part to argue for his growing conviction of an ethic that was at least non-rational, if not spiritual. Hillary's life served a useful purpose for Koestler at a time when Marxism had been exposed, in his view, as ultimately barren. Hillary could not know that after his death Koestler's theories would perpetuate a mythical and incomplete picture of a man whose sacrifice may indeed be more logical than Koestler supposed.

These partnerships themselves raise the final, and most important, question to the researcher seeking to find a unified ethical theme to Koestler's life. In what sense did Koestler's ethics differ from that of, say, Orwell or Hillary?

Once again, the answer is only becoming clear in the light of Koestler's suicide. I intend to demonstrate not only that Koestler retained his spiritual, almost Yogi-ethical, *Weltanschauung* throughout

his life but also that such a view enabled him to take his own life with, as he stated in his suicide note of June 1982, "some timid hopes for a depersonalised after-life beyond due confines of space, time, and matter and beyond the limits of our comprehension" (MS 2308; Plates 1 and 2). Such hopes, however "timid", certainly set Koestler apart from many of his contemporaries, possibly even Orwell, whose own belief in an after-life was as tenuous as Moses the Raven's belief in Sugarcandy Mountain in *Animal Farm*⁶.

The thesis that Koestler was engaged in a struggle with his own spiritual nature is not without precedent as I shall discuss in Chapter 1. I use the word *spiritual* deliberately - there is a distinction to be drawn, not least by Koestler himself, between *spiritual* and *Christian*, the latter equating in Koestler's mind to a rational and closed definition of God with little room for a sense of mystery⁷. It is this sense of mystery that fascinated Koestler throughout his life. Beloff goes as far as to say that Koestler never "explicitly repudiated" his belief in the "doctrine of the Third Order" (Beloff 1975: 82). Given the circumstantial evidence that confirms Koestler as a reluctant mystic at precisely that period in his life when he was attempting to reject yogi-ethics, it seems entirely right to ask the question of whether it is the influence of his perception of spiritual reality that gave rise to his distinctive hierarchical system, of which Koestler's ethics was but one strand.

Such a proposal is in itself not entirely new. Hamilton and Pearson (Pearson 1978), among others, have suspected Koestler of having a more spiritual side than he would publicly admit. Goldstein and Tyndall base

⁶Certainly, as Crick points out Orwell's request to be buried in a churchyard "when he had no connection with any church" (Crick 1980: 405) took people by surprise, and in the notebook Orwell wrote whilst hospitalised in London shortly before his death he refers, in an entry entitled "Death Dreams", to his "extinction" (Crick 1980: 401).

⁷The distinction is also illustrated by Koestler's suicide note, in which he explicitly refers to his "timid hopes for a de-personalised after-life": however else one interprets his timidity and concept of the "after-life", it would be difficult to equate such views with those of mainstream Christianity.

much of their work on the assumption that in Koestler's life various gods had failed, to paraphrase the title of one of his famous collaborative works (Crossman (ed) 1950). But what if, in fact, his spiritual side (I would not presume to use the definitive word "god") did not fail him, but indeed provided the foundation for his ethical system?⁸ Might it not be that those who, rightly or wrongly, argue the case for Koestler's spirituality are looking in the wrong place - that is, looking for overt admissions of religiosity rather than the implicit spirituality of his ethics?

It is my aim to demonstrate that the reality of the Third Order is an integral foundation to the post-war hierarchical system of ethics for which Koestler became justly famous in the *Janus* trilogy.

One shares with Crick after reading Orwell the distinct feeling that Orwell never lost faith in his Jack Londonesque "proles" - just as one reads Hillary's *The Last Enemy* with the feeling that for Hillary too, for all his snobbery, the key to salvation was the "bombed woman" who alone had the power of lifting his eyes to the reality around him. But for the student of Koestler, it is possible to come away from reading his great works, three of which are still in print - *Darkness at Noon*, *Arrival and Departure* and *The Sleepwalkers* - with quite the opposite thought. The more I studied Koestler, the more his spiritual side, first revealed at "the hours by the window" in the Seville jail, became apparent. Certainly, for Koestler, the proles always seemed to let him down, as they did his fictional creations, anti-heroes such as Rubashov or Peter Slavek. If there was any salvation to be found for them, it was by having faith in a higher reality that allowed them, and in 1983 Koestler himself, to accept death as part of the order of the universe, but not necessarily the highest order.

⁸If one accepts the argument of ethicists such as Peter Baelz (Baelz 1977) then one could argue that inevitably Koestler's questioning of the prevailing ethical system he had encountered in Soviet Russia would lead to wider questions about religion. For Baelz maintains that if the moral point of view is to hold a man's attention, it must contain a vision of "ex-centring...the conviction that in some way men belong to one another". Such visions, whilst not always religious, are either products of the imagination or windows into "ultimate reality". Only in terms of this higher reality does morality, according to Baelz, makes sense.

Compare the final experience of Rubashov in *Darkness at Noon*

"A second, smashing blow hit him on the ear. Then all became quiet. There was the sea again with its sounds. A wave slowly lifted him up. It came from afar and travelled sedately on, a shrug of eternity." (Koestler 1940: 267)

with the autobiographical account of his mystical experience in Seville

"Then I was floating on my back in a river of peace, under bridges of silence. It came from nowhere and flowed nowhere. Then there was no river and no I. The I had ceased to exist." (Koestler 1954a: 352)

or with his own suicide note written forty years later

"I wish my friends to know that I am leaving their company in a peaceful frame of mind, with some timid hopes for a de-personalised after-life beyond the confines of space, time, and matter, and beyond the limits of our comprehension. This 'oceanic feeling' has often sustained me at difficult moments, and does so now, while I am writing this." (MS 2308)

Thus what matters, even in the particular and historic setting to his fictional work, is the principle underlying Koestler's hierarchy and his own aspiration for the world in the shadow of Hiroshima: the principle of a higher, or spiritual, reality, the admission of which is necessary before a complete working ethic can be undertaken. *Darkness at Noon*, for which Koestler is justly most remembered, is not simply a great work of fiction. It may herald the higher ethic that is a necessary affirmation of Koestler's "Third Order" beyond the perceptual and conceptual realities of human existence.

CHAPTER 1: REVOLUTIONARY ETHICS

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to show how Koestler's experience of Stalinism shaped his early ethical theories. It is difficult to conceive his own particular brand of holism and abhorrence of determinism in all its forms arising but for his years in the Communist Party. The Russia that Koestler visited as an already successful journalist was of course a country in which the ethical debate of "ends and means" was being played out in all-too human terms - the Show Trials, the mass famines, the purges were seen as justifiable means if the end of a good and just society was achieved. That was Koestler's dream, and if it was punctured by events in Spain, the novels were to be a means by which such an ethical system could be more objectively examined.

But Koestler could never totally put aside his own experiences. It is his spiritual experience in Spain that gives rise to the Grammatical Fiction, which itself provides Koestler's unique answer to the critical question of the 1930s: Why did Bukharin confess?

I will attempt to show that only by analysing Koestler's revolutionary ethics by recourse to the so-called "reality of the Third Order" does Koestler's solution make any sense. That is not to say that Koestler's ethics were overtly religious; on the other hand, it has emerged that during the reign of Pope Paul the ex-Communist "was attracted to Roman Catholicism" according to his third wife, Cynthia (Koestler, C. 1975: 147). And there was no shortage of readers who chose to see Koestler as "essentially a Christian marque", largely because of his flight from humanist "closed systems" such as Communism¹. So perhaps the time has come for an overview of Koestler's ethics that takes proper account of his spiritual nature.

¹See, for example, Ursula Roberts to Arthur Koestler, 12 September 1954. "I can't but think of you as an essentially a Christian marque" (MS 2379/3). Roberts was one of several correspondents who tried to persuade Koestler to join the Anglican communion.

It is by taking into account the "reality of the Third Order", which has its origin in Koestler's experiences as a prisoner in Seville, that Webberley's progression, from the concrete to the philosophical, is complete: the progression ends with the spirituality of Rubashov's Grammatical Fiction and the irreducible "I love, therefore I am" ethic of Peter Slavek in the unpublished sequel to *Arrival and Departure*. The importance of this newly-discovered work lies in the manner in which the individual ethic is reinstated, thus providing the Yogi side of the spectrum of ethics that Koestler had encountered post-Communism but which still left him feeling dissatisfied.

I will then address the question Koestler posed in *The Yogi and the Commissar*: why did attempts to change the nature of man by Commissar methods fail? Koestler's answer is that Commissar-ethics does not accept the existence of a "Third Order" or Grammatical Fiction; both concepts, aired in the novels, point to the importance of the individual ethic and a solution to the "ends and means" dilemma that reconciles the apparently opposing poles of society and the individual. I shall argue that the novels (together with the unpublished manuscripts) are therefore an important exploration of the nature of freedom as suggested by Webberley, but importantly a barren exploration for neither the Yogi-ethic nor the Commissar-ethic was satisfactory either to Koestler the writer or Koestler the true-life revolutionary.

Finally, I hope to demonstrate the strong link between the writings of Richard Hillary and Arthur Koestler, and Koestler's indebtedness to Hillary for providing further evidence of the ethical significance of guilt and the existence of the Grammatical Fiction in a contemporary situation. I will suggest that Koestler uses the character of Peter Slavek, like Rubashov before him, to reveal the moral bankruptcy of revolutionary ethics and to prove that in complex real-life situations, neither Yogi-ethics nor Commissar-ethics offers a practical solution to the modern ethicist.

1.i. KOESTLER'S EARLY LIFE

The revolutionary hero

"The Rubashovs and Ivanovs have long been posthumously rehabilitated. The Gletkins have grown old and have long been picking up their 'merited pensions', they grow strawberries at their dachas and sigh about the past." (Bukovsky 1980: 7)

Much has changed since Arthur Koestler wrote *Darkness at Noon*. The system that attracted and later repelled the Hungarian-born writer has been dismantled, as Bukovsky predicted (Bukovsky 1980: 15); yet even at the time, Koestler's close friend and ally George Orwell suggested that close inspection of the revolutionary world inhabited by Rubashov, Gletkin and Ivanov would never appeal to the English-speaking world:

"The special world created by secret police forces, censorship of opinion, torture and frame-up trials is, of course, known about and to some extent disapproved of, but it has made very little emotional impact...For an Englishman to write *Darkness at Noon* would be as unlikely an accident as for a slave-trader to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 272)

The late Iain Hamilton, too, whilst conceding the enormous political impact of *Darkness...* notes the "English reluctance to acknowledge the reality of violence" (Hamilton 1975: 87); yet in 1941 it was surely understandable if readers at the time thought *Darkness...* strong meat. Writing in October of that year, Koestler remarked that reality was so horribly overstating itself as to become indigestible for the normal and particularly the normal English mind (MS 2372/1: 105).

Koestler had provided the "emotional impact" but that also seems further to restrict him to the Cold War era when "the end of history seemed real, often imminent" (Sperber 1977: 1). Thus, Sperber argues, Koestler's reputation is clouded by the memory of this apocalyptic and prophetic writer allowing readers to place him in a very small pigeonhole marked anti-Communist.

Darkness... as prophecy

But there is a wider context to Koestler, the revolutionary hero, than merely the confessions, in novel form, of one clambering "out of

a poisoned river strewn with the wreckage of flooded cities and the corpses of the drowned", to quote Koestler's parody of Picasso (Koestler 1954a: 15). Bukovsky believes that *Darkness at Noon* will remain topical for as long as there are people alive wishing to transform society for the better, communism being "the most consistent and the most extreme form of this striving" (Bukovsky 1980: 15). His thesis is that the pull towards justice is a powerful emotive force which man has the greatest difficulty in controlling. There will always be revolutionary heroes like Rubashov created by writers like Koestler.

Also, one can take from Sperber's analysis of Koestler *qua* prophetic and apocalyptic and argue that these very labels place the subject outside the pigeonhole of "anti-Communist". Rees, for example, observes that *Darkness...* "has had the peculiar distinction of appearing to predict and influence the future" alluding to the public confession of Koestler's one-time Communist Party comrade, Otto Katz in the Czech purge of 1952. In his last statement to a tribunal that had accused Katz of assorted contrived charges, Katz quoted, virtually word for word, Rubashov's last speech to indicate its falsity and appeal to his friends to organize the kind of rescue operation that he and others had organised to save Koestler in Spain (see Koestler 1954a: 405). It appeared, Rees wrote later, "as if Rubashov had returned to life to repeat the message of the novel" (Rees: 275).

Katz' confession and the unfolding farce of another show trial filled Koestler with a horrific sense of *déjà vu*. This was fifteen years after the publication of *Darkness...* But one does not have to look far beyond the novel to see evidence of the prophetic intention of the writer. In Koestler's correspondence with E. M. Forster, suffused with the pessimism of the darkest year of the war, Forster writes that Koestler "vividly recalls the duty of prophecy" (MS 2345/1: 52) and suggests they both have in common a dream of "a society where human love can flourish". One correspondent noted

"Your books are a terrible indictment of our era of so-called civilisation, but I believe they are human documents of the greatest value to the world of the future." (MS 2371/2: 60-61)

Koestler the prophet is a title that the author himself acknowledged in a preface to a later collection of essays, when, having published the

second volume of his autobiography, he suggested that

"the errors are atoned for...Cassandra has gone hoarse, and is due for a vocational change." (Koestler 1955: viii)

He had, after all, alerted the world to the full extent of the horrors of the Stalinist Purge; the world may not have been ready to listen as for much of the War it was in the Allies' interests to look favourably on 'smiling Uncle Joe' Stalin, a fact that was not lost on Koestler's friend, George Orwell, writing in his diary in July 1941.

"One could not have a better example of the moral and emotional shallowness of our time, than the fact that we are now more or less pro-Stalin. This disgusting murderer is temporarily on our side, and so the purges, etc, are suddenly forgotten." (OA7/4: 106)

Clearly, there were those who sought to persuade Koestler to refute the obvious analogy between "Number One" and Stalin in later printings of the book. Paul Willert advised otherwise:

"I do not think that you will feel like changing anything that you wrote because of the success of No. 1. And what is more important, you should not change anything. Nor should anyone who has regard for the truth, a hope that *plus ça change* is not the inevitable sum of human endeavour, be anything but grateful for the book [*Darkness at Noon*]. It is still hard to talk with the faithful." (MS 2371/3: 51)

In such an atmosphere, even the arch-English Orwell found it virtually impossible to find a publisher for *Animal Farm*, the manuscript being refused by Gollancz and T. S. Eliot - "what was needed [in *Animal Farm*] was... more public-spirited pigs" (OA: A157)².

Thus, in its first year of publication, *Darkness...* only sold 4,000 copies in Great Britain. But in 1946, *Darkness...* was translated into French (*Le Zéro et L'Infinie*), sold 400,000 copies and de Gaulle was swept into power on the back of the anti-Communist vote assisted in no small measure by the French Communist Party's misguided attempts at suppression of the novel. In Britain, the end of the war brought to light the hidden contradiction between the aims of Russia and the West, and the "truth of the terrible picture Koestler had drawn" (Rees: 273) was discovered. The revolutionary hero had come of age.

²Koestler remarked in an interview to the late Iain Hamilton (5 March 1974) that the "official line" from 1942 to 1945 was that nothing should irritate Stalin. "Nobody wanted to publish Orwell." MS 2436/5: 25.

Guilt and helplessness

But note "the errors are atoned for": the need for atonement and the sense of guilt had been themes in Koestler's life since childhood:

"...the first major fact that took root in my mind was the consciousness of guilt. These roots grew quickly, silently, and greedily, like a eucalyptus tree, under the driftsand of early experience." (Koestler 1952: 34)

Koestler was no ordinary revolutionary hero. He admitted that he acquired guilt automatically "in the same way one's hands grew dirty as the day wore on" (Koestler 1952: 34) and the Tree of Guilt figures large in his writing. If Rees and Browne (MS 2323/4) fail to make the connection between the overriding sense of guilt and helplessness and the nature of Koestler's revolutionary involvement and its aftermath, others, notably Carlet and John Hale, stress the ethical significance of guilt in Koestler's writings of this period.

Carlet and Hale share the thesis that the revolutionary hero, as depicted in the novels and the author's own life, serves as a means of breaking the walls of a "portable prison" (MS 2435/4: 154). In Hale's screenplay, Koestler is literally chained to the past - symbolised by a desk in a prison cell inhabited by both Rubashov and Koestler - "paying the debt" (MS 2436/1: 19). This is a barely disguised allusion to a phrase from his wartime friend, the pilot Richard Hillary, often used by Koestler: "The survivor is always the debtor". For Koestler, a Hungarian Jew, survived whilst Carlet estimates 90% of his family and friends were to die in the gulags of Stalin or concentration camps of Nazi Germany (MS 2435/4: 156). Curiously, Koestler himself did not see his survival as anything other than a "typical case history of a central-european member of the educated middle classes born in the first years of our century" (Koestler 1954a: 422), dismissing the mass extermination of his race in six lines of text within the context of his Zionism (Koestler 1954a: 379).

"It was entirely normal for a writer, an artist, politician or teacher with a minimum of integrity to have several escapes from Hitler and/or Stalin, to be chased and exiled" (Koestler 1954a: 428)

Entirely normal? How could anyone feel less than guilty when eventually waking to the fact that the typical histories of many in the Jewish

middle classes of central Europe ended not in survival but torture and death?

Destiny from above

But Hale's prison has another dimension, for Koestler also confessed in his autobiography that in his youth the universe was, in Galileo's paraphrase, a book printed in the language of mathematical equations. The prison is no more or less than the fixed universe of Kepler to which Koestler returned again and again both for inspiration and consolation but which, at this period in his life, spoke of destiny determined from above, trapping him in time and space, chapter and verse. It would be anachronistic to read into any analysis of Koestler the revolutionary hero the neat ethical distinctions between destiny from above and destiny from below which were to appear in 1943, after *Arrival and Departure*, and out of which were to grow Koestler's developed idea of Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics - and ultimately the holon. But it is surely not anachronistic to detect an almost obsessive regard for the influence of the stars and a feeling of determinism quite literally from the very first sentence of Koestler's autobiography:

"From the beginnings of civilisation man has held the belief that the constellation of heavenly bodies at the moment of his birth had an influence on his fate." (Koestler 1952: 13)

Koestler began writing the account of his early life by looking up the "secular horoscope" (i.e. the newspaper reports of actual events) for the day of his birth, a horoscope which "yielded as much information as the stars ever would on the field of force into which I was born and on the influences that were to shape my character and fate" (Koestler 1952: 18).

Scammell has argued that this was an autobiographical trick (Scammell pers. comm.): Koestler merely selected from *The Times*, *ex post facto*, news items that reflected his later interests in life - pogroms in Russia, the Russo-Japanese pact and so on. Thus Scammell is not

convinced that Koestler believed in any "occult" connection³. However, one could cite Koestler's belief in synchronicity (Koestler 1972) to argue that he may have been amenable to some form of astrological synchronicity, if not destiny from above.

The revolutionary hero is thus fighting against the stars, or at least against some predetermined fate - "the law and order of things" as Spartacus tells Nicos - that induces a feeling of helplessness as much as guilt. Helplessness and guilt are twin themes to which we shall return frequently in the course of this analysis of Koestlerian ethics; suffice to say that Koestler saw himself at this point as a revolutionary hero following in the footsteps of his childhood hero, Baron Munchausen - fighting the helplessness by taking a part in the action (Koestler 1952: 41).

The action had taken him from his student days at the University of Vienna and a collective farm at Galilee to various important correspondent's posts (including one assignment on the *Graf Zeppelin* trip to the North Pole). Finally, he joined the Communist Party and duly made the pilgrimage to Russia: "more in the nature of an hallucination than a journey through a real country" (Rees: 257). Koestler's conviction in his actions was to be finally shattered by his involvement in the Spanish Civil War.

"For him, as others, the issues in Spain were so absolutely clear that the Civil War offered an opportunity, perhaps the last, for the Party to demonstrate that, in spite of the mutilations and deformations it had suffered, it was still the only force capable of defeating fascism. In Spain, however, the policy of the Party revealed the same contradictions...the same perverted logic, as it had already shown in Germany and in the Soviet Union itself." (Rees: 260)

The god had failed, leaving Koestler to use his novels as an expiation of guilt and a prophetic means of combating the sense of helplessness that had dogged him throughout his life.

³ If it was merely an "autobiographical trick", then it was one that Koestler was prepared to repeat on more than one occasion, notably in Robert Reid's BBC "biography/autobiography of Arthur Koestler" for BBC TV, in which Koestler persists in referring to his horoscope as a "template" for his life (MS 2435/3: 11).

"The reality of the Third Order"

Supposedly under the sentence of death whilst in the Seville prison⁴, Koestler underwent what he perceived as a spiritual experience, the nature of which was to influence his writing for at least the next decade. "His whole outlook and sense of values", Beloff writes (Beloff 1975: 82) "underwent a profound transformation as a result of a mystical experience."

Readers of his account of his adventures in Spain, *Spanish Testament* and *Dialogue with Death*⁵, will search in vain for a detailed account of this experience. Koestler later said this was because he was "still too shattered and confused to give a clear account, even to myself, of what had happened in cell no. 40" (Koestler 1954a: 353). Throughout the various printings of *Dialogue...*, Koestler remained resolutely silent on the matter.

"Still more often I dream that I must return to No. 41⁶ because

⁴Koestler always asserted that after his arrest in Spain he had been sentenced to death, repeating the claim in numerous interviews and articles. Thus, in the Danube edition of *Dialogue with Death*, he makes reference to Marcel Junod's *Warrior without Weapons* claiming that "Junod...negotiated my exchange...[and] was officially informed that I had been sentenced to death." (Koestler 1966c: 6). In fact, the passage to which Koestler refers mentions only the rumour to this effect (Junod 1951: 124f). As Scammell has pointed out (Scammell, pers. comm.), it is highly unlikely that a foreigner of such standing would be sentenced to death at that time. It is more reasonable to assert that Koestler *thought at the time* he was under sentence of death, and in later reminiscences allowed this feeling to become an established objective fact.

⁵*Dialogue with Death* first appeared as Part II of *Spanish Testament*, an overtly propagandist account of his experiences during the Spanish Civil War (Koestler 1937: 207-382). For various reasons, *Spanish Testament* was never reprinted in its original form and the psychological account of Koestler's experiences was abridged and published separately in its own right (Koestler 1954b; Koestler 1966c). Justifying the separation of the two works, Koestler wrote "...the political background was irrelevant and the narrative, [*Dialogue with Death*] as far as it went, was the truthful account of an intimate experience" (Koestler 1954b: 7). In his discussion of the complex relationship between the two works, Sperber draws attention to *Dialogue...* being more than a reissue of the second half of *Spanish Testament*. (Sperber 1977: 109)

⁶It is a minor point, but Koestler's memory of the number of his cell is unreliable. In *The Invisible Writing* and later works, he invariably refers to his cell as cell number 40.

I have left something behind there. I think I know what this something is, but it would be too complicated to explain." (Koestler 1954b: 208)

Sixteen years after his release from Seville, he was more forthcoming.

"The 'hours by the window' [in the cell]...had filled me with a direct certainty that a higher order of reality existed, and that *it alone* invested existence with meaning. I came to call it later 'the reality of the third order'. The narrow world of sensory experience constituted the first order; this perceptual world was enveloped by the conceptual world which contained phenomena not directly perceivable, such as gravitation, electro-magnetic fields, and curved space. The second order of reality filled in the gaps and made sense of the sensory world. In the same manner, the third order of reality enveloped, interpreted and gave meaning to the second. It contained 'occult' phenomena which could not be apprehended or explained either on the sensory or on the conceptual level, and yet occasionally invaded them like spiritual meteors piercing the primitive's vaulted sky." (my italics) (Koestler 1954a: 353)

The duration of the actual experiences, which seem to have arisen during Koestler's attempts to forget his predicament by focusing upon mathematical formulae⁷, was difficult to measure. They apparently occurred two or three times a week and could never be voluntarily induced. Each time the "coming-back to the lower order of reality" was gradual, "like waking up from anaesthesia" (Koestler 1954a: 352). Interestingly, they continued after his liberation but less frequently.

The important fact is that Koestler "found a peaceful ecstasy" (West 1977: 89). Koestler, Sperber writes, "emerges from the trials and temptations of politics to discover spiritual meaning and to be born anew" (Sperber 1977: 110). The question may still be asked, however, to what extent did Koestler's apparent experience of these 'three orders' of reality amount to a philosophical system in his later work, or was this another example of Koestler's "utter confusion of intellect and emotion" (Deutscher 1977: 98)?

Beloff is in no doubt, concluding his essay on "Koestler's philosophy of mind" with the account of the "hours by the window" and subtly

⁷See, for example, Koestler's account in the later screenplay he wrote to *Dialogue...* (MS 2324/1), and his autobiographical account of Seville (Koestler 1954a: 351).

restyling Koestler's phrase "the reality of the third order" into "the doctrine of the third order". Beloff justifies the approach by balancing this view of Koestler with the latter's scientific interests, which might indicate a more rational philosophy. The two sides need to be reconciled.

"In that case his naturalistic theory of mind might belong only to the more familiar scientific face while a quite different esoteric doctrine might issue from the other lesser-known face." (my italics) (Beloff 1975: 82)

Hence, one supposes, a doctrine of the third order.

I shall adopt a more cautious approach in this thesis, using Koestler's original phrase, "the reality of the third order", which seems to me to both emphasise the objective veracity behind Koestler's experience and the importance it played in shaping Koestler's ethics. The phrase also suggests, to me at least, that Sperber is misleading by referring to "the hours by the window" as the mere discovery of "self". But I hope we shall see, as Koestler wrestles with the memory of his encounter with spiritual reality, that there is no individualistic creed at stake here. On the contrary, such glimpses of higher reality became the foundation upon which Koestler's writing would be built. He himself said as much.

"In the years that followed I wrote a number of books in which I attempted to assimilate the experiences of cell No. 40. Ethical problems had hitherto played no part in my writing; now they became its central concern. In *The Gladiators*, two-thirds of which was written after Seville, and *Darkness at Noon*...I tried to come to intellectual terms with the intuitive glimpses gained during the 'hours by the window'." (Koestler 1954a: 358)

So important was this experience that the title of the second volume of his autobiography, *The Invisible Writing*, arose from his analysis of "the hours by the window". It was, he wrote,

"a text written in invisible ink, and though one could not read it, the knowledge that it existed was sufficient to alter the texture of one's existence, and make one's actions conform to the text." (Koestler 1954a: 354)

It is not unreasonable to argue, as West has done (West 1977), that an experience that seemed to bring into question the very existence of the self, should slowly alter Koestler's intellectual foundations and cause him to search for a substitute for the utilitarian concept of

ethics⁸. Thus we can trace Koestler's concern in *ethics* as much as his awareness of *spirituality* to this same point, when "The I had ceased to exist" (Koestler 1954a: 352).

The ethics of revolution

I suggest that ethical considerations were to preoccupy Koestler for the rest of his life. Certainly, when reassessing his own novels thirty years later he eschewed a political approach, highlighting the ethical core of the trilogy.

"*Darkness at Noon* is the second novel of a trilogy...which revolves around the central theme of revolutionary ethics, and of political ethics in general: the problem, whether, or to what extent, a noble end justifies ignoble means, and the related conflict between morality and expediency." (Koestler 1977: 257)

Calder concurs with this analysis but sharpens the focus by pointing out that the battle of ends and means is fought out on a personal level by individuals embroiled in a conflict between collective necessity and individual morality (Calder 1968: 121). We may label these specific conflicts either historical (*The Gladiators*), historical-political (*Darkness...*) or psychological (*Arrival and Departure*). In each story, the central character has to weigh up his own personal moral code against the needs of a larger group. By exploring the different routes chosen by the characters, Koestler defines revolutionary ethics.

By placing the novels within a biographical context, however, I aim to demonstrate the validity of Webberley's thesis which seeks to unite Koestler's political and scientific work as two different approaches to the same ethical debate on the concept of freedom, a view endorsed by the tentative title (dropped before publication) of Hamilton's controversial biography of *Koestler: Ends and Means (or The Man Who Survived)*⁹.

"what distinguishes Koestler as an interdisciplinary figure is

⁸This is certainly Koestler's conclusion to his account of "the hours by the window" (Koestler 1954a: 358).

⁹See Hamilton's draft synopsis for the biography. MS 2436/5. (1974? notes)

his capacity, not merely to cross a cultural chasm, but to take the same essential problem [freedom versus determinism] with him." (Webberley 1975: 12)

We may not agree with Webberley's claim that the determinist with a microscope is just as dangerous as the determinist with a gun, but Koestler had experience of both - his bitter personal and legal dispute with his biographer arose because Hamilton could not see the link between the two areas of his subject's life - and maintained frequently that the mentality of Ivanov and Gletkin is as much an ethical problem in science as it is in politics. For example, Calder reminds us of Koestler's abhorrence of behaviourism, which she believes stems from the denial of the validity of private consciousness. Consequently for the behaviourist the political problem of "ends and means" ceases to have meaning.

This is aired, of course, in *The Yogi...* essays in which political and scientific attitudes to determinism form a spectrum and the earlier focus on "ends and means" is subsumed into a debate on ethics in general. But it is, nevertheless, in the novels that the principles of "revolutionary ethics" are contained, principles that served only to heighten Koestler's frustration with "the static spectrum" of an unchanging world.

1.ii. THE GLADIATORS

Spartacus

When Koestler began his first full-length novel in 1935, he already felt disillusioned with the Communist Party in the wake of the Kirov murder. The Soviet Utopia had failed him and other writers of his generation (notably Auden). *The Gladiators*, the first novel in the trilogy, is, in the author's own words, "the story of another revolution that had gone wrong" (Koestler 1966a: 316). The writing of the novel at the time was thus "a form of occupational therapy" (Koestler 1966a: 317) rather than a serious analysis of revolutionary ethics.

The book took four years to write - a series of interruptions, culminating in Koestler's time in a Spanish prison, made writing difficult; but the nature of these interruptions and Koestler's growing unease with where the modern revolution was leading also ensured that the first century BC became an attractive alternative in which the revolutionary hero could dwell. His imagination, requiring details of a "strict, indeed, pedantic accuracy" such as the design of the slaves' shoes and how they were tied, ensured the escape (Koestler 1966a: 319).

The central figure is the leader of The Slaves' Revolt, Spartacus. His utopian dream of establishing a "Sun State", a brotherhood of slave towns, in which the freed gladiators might live in a Realm of Goodwill, is ended when Spartacus finds he does not have the stomach to witness the slow death by crucifixion (that he himself has ordered) of the dissident Celts whose brutality had threatened the new order. By the end of the novel, nobody has really changed and Koestler echoes his own feelings on the helplessness of the revolutionary hero:

"Really, everything depended on the period in which...a man was born...whether time threw him on the rubbish heap or allowed him to make history." (Koestler 1939: 287)

The Sun City is destroyed and Spartacus, once again an anonymous slave - "the man with the fur-skin" - is crucified with the other revolutionaries.

Opinions are divided over the literary merits of the novel. Pritchett, a consistent critic of Koestler's writing, is surprisingly fulsome in his praise of *The Gladiators*, citing its sense of human tragedy and an absence of twentieth century Marxist or Freudian influence (Pritchett 1977: 57). Conversely, Orwell considers it a weak novel in which the motives of the main character are never fully explained. Spartacus is depicted neither as a visionary nor as power-hungry but is driven by some obscure force he does not understand. Orwell's view, shared by most reviewers, is summed up by a contemporary comment of Spartacus as a character who "remains shadowy, veiled in the half-light of a dream born out of due season" (Anon. 1939).

Yet in a sense such views are the best possible answer to those critics who see the novel in largely autobiographical terms: Spartacus as Koestler in sandals. Koestler was, and always remained, more

interested in ideas than people: "it is the dream that matters most for Mr Koestler, deliberately so." (Anon. 1939). Spartacus remains strangely mute; when he does speak, he finds his own voice alien to him (Koestler 1939: 65) - as Peter will also find in *Arrival and Departure*.

A law of history

It is the Law of Detours that endows the novel with an ethical significance outwith the historical period of its setting. Simply expressed, the Law of Detours is the Koestlerian principle that heroism must be tempered by discipline. The approach the Law advocates is utterly dispassionate and objective: the hero has to take hard decisions for the good of the group. Compassion is perceived as a danger to the heroic ideal, frustrating the success of the revolution by *detouring* the hero's attention from the original goal. It is a Law most famously invoked by the "unsex me here" soliloquy of Lady Macbeth:

"...make thick my blood,
Stop up th'accesses, and passage to Remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of Nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keepe peace betweene
Th'effect and hit." (*Macbeth* Act I Scene V¹⁰)

Thus the Law of Detours is a law that *prohibits* detours and emphasises the goal of revolution even to the exclusion of all human emotion or "visitings of Nature", as noted by Koestler's creation in *The Gladiators*, Zozimos, the first to expound the Law of Detours in Koestler's fiction:

"Many a man has strutted the road of tyranny, at the outset solely with the purpose of serving his lofty ideals, and in the end the road alone made him carry on." (Koestler 1939: 141)

If the book is disillusioning, it is because the impetus of The Law of Detours makes revolutions disillusioning events, for "the road alone" devoid of the original compassion or ideals that precipitate

¹⁰The influential literary critic, Arnold Kettle, made a direct comparison between what he perceived as the pessimism of Orwell and Koestler and the comparable but, in his view, more optimistic, message of *Macbeth*. See Kettle 1953: 166-167.

revolution becomes a heartless place¹¹.

What Koestler had called *The Law of Detours* Orwell's reviewers labelled "the betrayed revolution", a thesis that in the opinion of Cyril Connolly neither Koestler nor Orwell had explored in sufficient detail (Connolly 1945b: 215-216). Connolly argued that the two writers had not realised that the violence necessary to achieve revolution generates an admiration of violence *per se*. In other words, following the Law of Detours inevitably leads to an abuse of power - "all animals are equal *but...*" Revolutionary ethics was thus represented by the horns of a dilemma: obey the Law of Detours and sacrifice all humanity; ignore the Law of Detours and allow compassion to colour your actions, and sacrifice the revolution itself.

That Koestler and Orwell found the same law of revolutionary ethics at work is not surprising; both were preoccupied at this stage of their writings with Stalinism, and there is a sense too in which the almost inevitable failure of those who adhere to the Law of Detours is merely part of history itself.

"All these sufferings, all these turbid detours which it is said one had to take for the sake of the goal - were they perhaps not means to an end at all, were they the law of history itself; and the goal only human fancy - without any reality to back it up?" (Koestler 1939: 149)

Thus, Fulvius' misgivings concern the dialectic of history rather than one relatively insignificant incident within that history. Spartacus attempts to obey the Law of Detours, "which compels the leader on the road to Utopia to be 'ruthless for the sake of pity'" (Koestler 1966a: 317), whilst in the process of a heroic struggle against suffering itself, "the law of history". By struggling against the law of history in this way, Spartacus attempts to free the slaves from their own heroic struggle against their masters, a struggle that reminded

¹¹The Law of Detours may also be applied to the satirical context of *Animal Farm*, where the ruthlessness of Napoleon (whose revolutionary path bears close resemblance to that of Spartacus) contrasts with the idealism of Snowball. In Orwell's work, however, Napoleon *does* follow "the road alone" - compare Boxer's fate with the reprieve of Koestler's dissident Celts - leading to the problems epitomised in arguably the most famous sentence of twentieth century literature: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others."

Spartacus of the problem of self-sacrifice that the author was to address more properly in *Darkness*...

"Heroism was obviously the outcome of man's physical ineptitude in attempting to assert Idea against the alien forces and menaces of Nature. But that a slave should place his heroism at the disposal of his master without either threat or ideal did still seem strange." (Koestler 1939: 134)

Rebellion and revolution

Carlet sees the nature of this struggle as rebellion rather than revolution (MS 2435/4: 137-138), because the hero pits himself against powers with which he cannot identify. The distinction is reinforced by Koestler's own experience:

"A revolutionary can identify himself with power, a rebel cannot; but I was a rebel, not a revolutionary." (Koestler 1954a: 120)

For a revolution to succeed, according to this Koestlerian analysis, the hero must learn to be ruthless for the sake of pity - to adopt the methods of the ruling powers in order to dethrone those same powers in the long term. As Zozimos puts it, "law must bow to necessity" (Koestler 1939: 58). So it is necessary for Spartacus to employ the barbaric method of crucifixion to establish order in the Sun City. Yet at the very last moment, as Spartacus watches thirty of his fellow slaves being crucified as punishment for disobeying the laws he has set down for Sun City, his nerve fails and he allows himself to be *detoured* by the pleading of Zozimos by ordering his tortured comrades to be taken down and freed. The failure of nerve is equated by John Hale in his unrealised screenplay with the subsequent failure of the slave revolution.

"Is it possible that Spartacus failed because he didn't understand that it is necessary to kill old comrades who deviate?" (MS 2436/1: 44)

In allowing compassion to cloud his judgment, Spartacus had not been able to adhere to the Law of Detours, as he later reflected.

"What had he done wrong, what had he omitted, to allow the horde to wriggle from his hold, so that his words meant nothing to them? He had walked the straight road, evil past behind and goal in front, had turned neither left nor right. Or was this the very error, to walk the straight and direct road - was it necessary to

make detours, to walk the crooked roads?" (Koestler 1939: 114)

Clearly there are ambiguities that remain in the Law of Detours. It is obvious that Spartacus on reflection is unsure whether a more compassionate approach to the foundation of Sun City would have achieved the desired goal of a brotherhood of slaves. Added to Spartacus' doubts is the undisputed fact that for most of the course of the slave revolt, he had "turned neither left nor right". Would a more compassionate, human approach - "to walk the crooked roads" - have been more successful? Zozimos, as ever the voice of conscience, is certainly in no doubt.

"He who yearns for the Sun State and the Realm of Goodwill should not use political wiles and sinister facetious tricks." (Koestler 1939: 139)

The very fact that such doubts remain unresolved in the mind of Spartacus tells us much about Koestler's view of heroism. Heroism is characterised in Koestler's early work as ill-thought out and hasty - a reflection, one need hardly add, of his view of his recent Communist years.

More importantly, it is perceived to be ethically weak, because the heroic ideal is not shared by a large number of people. It is therefore a defining characteristic of rebellion rather than revolution, for it lacks the power base of the latter. Indeed, Spartacus' attempts to set up a Sun State were doomed before he transgressed the Law of Detours and shrank from taking the final step of killing Crixus. For Spartacus cannot communicate his heroic ideals to the slaves, and in Carlet's analysis it is this "inanity of communication" that "leads back to failure and nightmare" (MS 2435/4: 93).

The reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* agreed, suggesting that the slaves were not sure enough to become disciplined soldiers of a new revolution. Hence, too, Spartacus' deep suspicion of prophets - "all prophets and priests are swindlers" is a favourite phrase of the slave leader (Koestler 1939: 289) - because, in Koestler's pragmatic view, prophecy succeeds only when it fits in "with the taste of the time - the wishes of many - the need and longing desire of many..." (Koestler 1939: 70). For Spartacus, the painful lesson was that a society which depends upon the inspiration of one man is doomed. Rebellion cannot

succeed for Spartacus.

Koestler realised that for the rebellion of two or three to become the revolution of a larger group, with a power base, a shared programme or credo was necessary. He suggested in the Danube edition¹² that a pre-Christian philosophy of communality ("which found a more sublime expression in the Sermon on the Mount") should have been implemented by Spartacus. But, of course, that is not the point of the book. Orwell may be right in thinking that Koestler deliberately falters between allegory and history by allowing the Sun City to be destroyed. In reality, there was no Sun City (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 275). But the novel was not intended to be a history lesson. Rather, it can be summed up as "a melancholy commentary on the failure of politics to respond to men's inner needs" (Scott-James 1939). Without the shared credo that might have changed the course of Roman history, the conclusion is inevitably disillusioning as Koestler no doubt intended, and most readers will want to concur with Hartley's observation that what remains in the memory is the killing and crucifixions.

In summary, Koestler's first piece on revolutionary ethics draws an important distinction between rebellion and revolution. Three criteria need to be satisfied for true revolution to take place:

- (a) the aspirations of a few must be shared by a larger number;
- (b) proper communication must take place between leader and followers;
- (c) heroism must be tempered with discipline (The Law of Detours).

Koestler was by now beginning to consider the question of what would happen if a Spartacan revolutionary followed the Law of Detours to the bitter end (Koestler 1966a: 317). The character of the Essene in *The Gladiators* provides the vital link with Koestler's next novel, *Darkness at Noon*. The Essene is the first character in Koestler's writing to emphasise the primacy of the individual over the needs of the group - see, for example, his lengthy discussion with Spartacus (Koestler 1939:

¹²The Danube Edition was the name chosen by Koestler to describe the collected works published by Hutchinsons from 1964 onwards. Koestler had raised the idea of a uniform edition in November 1962 (MS 2354/4). A publisher's memo of 1978 states "The Danube edition, in its completed form, will contain all novels, essays, and autobiographical books selected by Arthur Koestler to be preserved in standard edition of his works." (MS 2463/7)

70-74) - and is also the first to articulate the corruption of success, the darkness at noon that results from the revolutionary ethic.

Koestler's achievement, and arguably the work for which he will be most remembered, was to place the revolutionary ethic in a Stalinist setting. Thus, "the Many", the collective identity and inner voice of the Five Thousand who listen to Spartacus' call for a 'Town of Slaves' becomes the Grammatical Fiction of *Darkness*... The voice of reason, Nicos, is sharpened into the more dominant figures of Ivanov and Gletkin; the arithmetical logic of Lentulus becomes the algebra of Ivanov and of the revolution itself; and the diary of Fulvius becomes the diary of Rubashov.

Such comparisons are essential to establish the link between the novels that Koestler saw but which was missed at the time by readers whose concern was focused upon the more overtly biographical elements of *Darkness*.... Koestler's correspondence of this period is full of criticism and comments upon *Dialogue With Death*, *Scum of the Earth* and *Darkness*.... *The Gladiators*, in contrast, was neglected in favour of this other 'trilogy'¹³ in which the connection was perceived as purely semi-autobiographical rather than ethical. Yet it is possible to see Nicolai Salmanovitch Rubashov as a logical successor to Spartacus, a figure who pursues the Law of Detours to the bitter end and by whose predicament Koestler can fully explore the revolutionary ethic set out in his story of the slave rebellion.

1.iii. DARKNESS AT NOON

Rubashov

There are three levels at which Koestler's most famous novel can be viewed: semi-autobiographical, political and ethical. Whilst it is the latter that is the subject of this thesis, a brief examination of the

¹³E. M. Pye to Arthur Koestler, 10 October 1941, refers to the three aforementioned books collectively, and in common with other correspondents, makes no mention of *The Gladiators*. (MS 2371/2: 60-61)

first two will help to highlight the ethical considerations in Rubashov's plight.

Koestler had arrived in Spain as an agent for the Comintern after consultation with Willy Munzenberg under the guise of correspondent for the *News Chronicle*. It was almost inevitable that this rather crude and ill-thought out strategy would be exposed; in February 1937 Koestler was arrested and sentenced to death as a spy. In the period of solitary confinement that followed, Koestler was confronted with death.

"During three months my thoughts revolved round death as a top spins round its axis. Yet I thought Death was close when he was miles away, and laughed in my dreams when he fetched my neighbours." (Koestler 1954b: 208)

On one occasion when the warders were taking away men from their cells for execution, the priest was about to open the door of Koestler's cell before, for whatever reason, the warder changed his mind¹⁴.

Rees argues that both Koestler and Rubashov experienced in prison a "sudden and explosive eruption into consciousness" of experiences hitherto repressed (Rees: 261). Instincts that had not, could not, be given expression in the closed system of Marxism now came to the surface.

"The dilemma of Koestler-Rubashov in his cell is precisely what kind of validity to attribute to a kind of insight which threatens to shatter the coherence of a system of thought on which the whole of his life has been based." (Rees: 262)

Koestler perceived a certain rough justice in his predicament - he was a spy, and had spent his years as a Communist, in Rees' words, impersonating a character in which he fundamentally did not believe. Like Rubashov, he must pay for his crime. It is an interesting parallel that Rees draws, but nevertheless a dangerous one. Koestler was treated much more humanely than his fictional creation, Rubashov; he did not undergo physical torture nor did he share the same unhappy fate. Entering into the mind of Koestler cannot take us into the mind of Bukharin, upon whose experience the characterisation of Rubashov is

¹⁴We have, of course, only Koestler's word for this. The incident is described in *Dialogue With Death*: "They came to my cell and the priest fumbled at the bolt. I could see him through the spy-hole... 'No, not this one' said the warder. They went on to the next cell. He, too, was prepared." (Koestler 1954b: 176)

based.

The question might even be asked: did Koestler, an unreliable autobiographer at the best of times, later embellish his account of his time in prison to deliberately highlight the parallels between his experience and that of Rubashov?

Certainly, the details of Rubashov's prison are so strikingly similar to Koestler's account of the prison cell in Seville that they cannot be coincidental: Cell number 40 in Seville becomes Cell number 404 in the novel. Rubashov's desire to study astronomy¹⁵, the dimensions of the prison cell (six and a half paces each way up and down the cell) and Rubashov's ritual of never walking on the cracks of the paving stones¹⁶, the betrayal of Arlova¹⁷, the characterisations of Gletkin and Ivanov¹⁸, all have immediate identifiable counterparts in Koestler's real life. But if the parallels are no more than that - parallels made with the benefit of hindsight that are used as inspiration for a fictional setting by an imaginative author at the peak of his creative powers - the fact that Koestler drew attention to them himself is worth noting, even if Rees' identification carries the parallels too far. Koestler may well have been alerting the reader to the fact that he, Arthur Koestler, had once been taken in by a system of thought upon which he had sought to base his whole life and that he, like Rubashov, had his whole life questioned by the insight he had gained whilst in prison.

Ironically, the proofs of the novel were delivered to Pentonville to

¹⁵Hamilton, Koestler's biographer, is typical of many critics who saw *The Sleepwalkers* as a later interest; in one of his taped interviews with Hamilton, Koestler corrects his biographer by emphasising that his interest in astronomy dates to around 1934. MS 2436/5.

¹⁶Rubashov's superstitions were shared by Koestler and Anthony Grey, a journalist and former prisoner of the Chinese communists, whose interview with Koestler was reprinted for publication in Koestler 1974:153-154.

¹⁷Hale (MS 2436/1) makes the figure of Arlova virtually interchangeable with Nadeshda, the woman Koestler felt guilty at betraying in Baku - see Koestler 1954: 90-107.

¹⁸Hale (MS 2436/1: 9) notes that Gletkin and Ivanov are based on the two GPU workers that Koestler met in Baku.

"Arthur Koestler Prisoner no. 8539", where he also endured solitary confinement as an enemy alien entering Britain after his release from Seville, internment in Vichy France and brief stay in Lisbon. It was Daphne Hardy, his girlfriend and the translator of the novel, who suggested the title from Milton's lines in *Samson Agonistes* "Oh dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon", on one of her visits to Pentonville. The fact that the wording of the title was an afterthought long after the novel had been completed serves as a warning against those such as Pritchett who read Jewish themes into the novel, which Koestler had provisionally entitled *The Vicious Circle*.

The Theory of Confessions

Leaving aside the contentious matter of semi-autobiographical detail, Koestler certainly did intend his readers to draw parallels between his knowledge of the Stalinist purges and Show Trials and the experiences of Rubashov. The dedication of the novel is quite explicit: "N. S. Rubashov is a synthesis of the lives of a number of men who were victims of the so-called Moscow trials." Political similarities are apparent: Rubashov's thinking is based on Nikolai Bukharin - indeed, the confessions of the two men are almost identical! In some instances, the parallels between fact and fiction became apparent only years after the novel was published: a former head of Soviet intelligence, Walter Krivitsky¹⁹, describing the interrogative techniques used by Sloutski on the old Bolshevik Mrachovsky, could just as easily be writing about the interrogation by Ivanov on Rubashov, a similarity that Koestler admitted was not entirely explained by the comparable framework of ideas and historical circumstance.

"...there were similarities that went beyond that. In both cases the interrogation opens with accuser and accused indulging in

¹⁹Krivitsky 1992: 199-217. Krivitsky argues that "the confessions never presented a riddle to those who had been on the inside of the Stalin machine", because those who capitulated did so in the firm belief that Socialism "might still emerge out of his bloody and monstrous tyranny". It is clear from Krivitsky's account that Sloutski used the same logic as Ivanov to persuade Mrachovsky by "days and nights of argument...that nobody else but Stalin could guide the Bolshevik Party."

sentimental reminiscences of the civil war; in both cases the accuser has served under the accused's command; as a result of the civil war, one in each pair of antagonists has a game leg; in both cases the interrogator in turn liquidates himself. As I read [Krivitsky], I had the impression of meeting the *Doppelgänger*, the spectral doubles of Rubashov and Ivanov..." (Koestler 1954a: 400)

One reader reckoned that *Darkness at Noon* was "the most devastating exposure of Stalinism that I have read" (MS 2371/1: 11). Reviewers noted "a grimly fascinating interpretation of the logic of the Russian Revolution" and "a plausible reason for these incredible confessions at the Moscow trials" (Anon 1940; George 1941: 18).

It is possible therefore to view the book purely as a political-historical comment on events in Moscow in the 1930s, an attempt to answer the question why steadfast revolutionaries who had experienced hard labour and torture suddenly acknowledge absurd accusations and repent.

Hence the novel is categorised as "moral fable" by Browne (along with Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) in which the true nature of Stalinist Russia is explored and the confessions by Bukharin and others rationalised (MS 2323/4: 17f).

Orwell (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 276) offers three explanations for the Show Trial confessions:

1. The accused were guilty.
2. The accused confessed because of torture or threats to their families.
3. The accused confessed because they feel themselves to be mentally bankrupt. Unable to argue with the rational logic of the Party, they despair and confess in a final act of loyalty.

Orwell concludes by noting that the third option is that favoured by Koestler. But that is not strictly true, as Koestler himself, wounded by the sort of harsh review Orwell inflicted upon his friends, points out (Koestler 1954a: 401). Hare-lip confesses due to the second option, the illiterate peasant because he could not understand, Arlova from the first option, and so on. Orwell had clearly forgotten Rubashov's final thoughts:

"Some were silenced by physical fear, like Hare-lip; some hoped to save their heads; others at least to save their wives or sons

from the clutches of the Gletkins. The best of them kept silent in order to do a last service to the Party, by letting themselves be sacrificed as scapegoats." (Koestler 1940: 253)

But there is one major obstacle for those who wish to pursue a political interpretation of *Darkness...*, namely the introduction by Koestler of the Grammatical Fiction, "the silent partner" (Koestler 1940: 255) whose existence called into question the mathematical nature of revolution espoused by Ivanov. The Grammatical Fiction makes its first appearance during the Second Hearing. Confronted by the "consequent logic" of Ivanov, an inner voice seems to call into question the infallible rightness of the Party's reasoning.

"He [Rubashov] found out that those processes wrongly known as 'monologues' are really dialogues of a special kind; dialogues in which one partner remains silent while the other, against all grammatical rules, addresses him as 'I' instead of 'You', in order to creep into his confidence and fathom his intentions; but the silent partner just remains silent, shuns observation and even refuses to be localised in time and space." (Koestler 1940: 108)

Thus the Grammatical Fiction takes its title from the apparently scandalous discovery of the existence of self, the first person singular, which the Party cannot concede (hence *Grammatical Fiction*). Rubashov finds the Grammatical Fiction, referred to as the "silent partner", spoke without being addressed; his experience of it was not mystical but of "a quite concrete character" and far more important than the interview with Ivanov.

"Rubashov tried to study this newly discovered entity very thoroughly during his wanderings through the cell; with the shyness of emphasising the first person singular customary in the Party, he had christened it the 'grammatical fiction'." (Koestler 1940: 110-111)

Crucially, Rubashov notes that Grammatical Fiction began when logical thinking ended, thwarting Ivanov's attempts to persuade Rubashov to see the logic of revolutionary ethics.

"It was obviously an essential part of his being, to remain out of reach of logical thought, and then to take one unawares, as from an ambush, and attack one with day-dreams and toothache." (Koestler 1940: 111)

Ivanov interprets this as the discovery of conscience in "Saint Rubashov" but tells Rubashov that history has no conscience - every compromise with one's conscience is treachery. To make peace with

yourself is to betray the cause. It is these "sentimental impulses" that lead to Rubashov having to contradict historical necessity and now unable to see the logic of sacrificing a few thousand for the future good of millions.

So why does Rubashov confess? The answer lies in the role of conscience played by the Grammatical Fiction and the demands it makes upon him - not unlike, indeed, the role Zozimos plays in helping Spartacus break the Law of Detours. In the Koestlerian scheme of things, the stirrings of conscience and the voice of compassion break the logical equation. Rubashov is forced from the dialogue with his "silent partner" to admit that his previous lack of compassion and obedience to the Party's logic have been a fundamental error. The principles of the Party are now, Carlet notes, "pretexts" as Rubashov passes from "guiltless consideration to fruitless solitude" (MS 2435/1: 144). Confession follows and for the last few hours of his life Rubashov is left alone with his silent partner.

"The hours which remained to him belonged to that silent partner whose realm started just where logical thought ended." (Koestler 1940: 254)

He is acutely aware that by failing to acknowledge the Grammatical Fiction, he has committed a treachery to himself and to Richard and Arlova.

It has to be said, however, that this does not entirely answer Orwell's misgivings over the Theory of Confessions. Even given that Rubashov is in a tiny minority who confess because of the discovery of their self-deception, rather than for the protection of family or friends or the fear of torture, what is to be gained by such a confession? Why should Rubashov assist the Party by signing a confession knowing that their logic is such a sham?

The explanation favoured by Carlet is that Rubashov feels that he must share the fate of those he now realises he has destroyed in the past (MS 2435/4: 145). Hence the feeling of peace immediately before his death - a factor frequently ignored by critics of *Darkness*.... This does not necessarily provide a full answer, primarily because it ignores the historical fact that all such revolutionary dissidents had their fate sealed long before the question of signing confessions

arose. One could argue that there might be more peace to be gained from non-cooperation and a total dissociation of the revolutionary motive (i.e. martyrdom) than by suddenly admitting to various ridiculous crimes. Why should the reawakening of conscience lead to this particular action as opposed to other available options?

The question is central to a proper understanding of the different approaches to revolutionary ethics by Orwell and Koestler. The dominant themes in Orwell's work, according to Crick (Crick 1980), emerge from his reading and subsequent book reviews and coincidentally or not *Animal Farm* followed soon after Orwell's re-evaluation of Koestler. Certainly, Orwell does not avoid the conundrum posed by Rubashov's confession in his "fairy story" - witness the "confessions" made by the farmyard animals for "crimes" that they had clearly invented (Orwell 1945: 73-74) - but Orwell chooses to emphasise the brutality of the executions by Napoleon's dogs rather than the possible motives behind the "confessions".

The numinous in Koestler's ethics

One possible solution lies in Rees' approach which emphasises the spiritual aspect of the silent partner:

"He is like the shadowy character whom the disciples encountered on the road to Emmaus, shapeless and featureless in the dusk, and yet, as they all felt, the real centre of the great event in which they had taken part." (Rees: 268)

Rees' scriptural analogy is a reasonable one, given that Koestler himself had introduced the figure of Christ into cell 404 early in the novel. Examining his feet, a verse occurs to Rubashov that compared the feet of Christ with a white roebuck in a thornbush (Koestler 1940: 14). From that point to the end of the novel, Christian metaphors abound. Indeed, the penultimate scene has old Wassilij comparing the trial of Rubashov with the trial and passion of Christ. There, Wassilij recalls Christ's prophecy of Peter's denial and in his reaction to Rubashov's final speech utters the words from Gethsemane "Thy will be done" (Koestler 1940: 252).

The spiritual soul of Rubashov, the *animula blandula, vagula* (Rees)

is outside the experience and the vocabulary of the 'Neanderthal' Gletkin, and quite possibly Ivanov also. For to admit its existence is only to compound one's guilt and multiply the offences with which one is charged. The Party becomes almost incidental to the real struggle for Rubashov's soul, and finally merely provides a means by which Rubashov can pay for those acts of treachery revealed to him by his silent partner. As we have noted above, a reading of *Darkness...* often ends with a feeling of relief or even blessed release as Rubashov finally surrenders, not so much to the Party as to his conscience.

It is Koestler's spirituality - he would eschew the term mysticism, according to his third wife (C. Koestler 1975: 147) - that ultimately leads him to offer his Theory of Confessions where Orwell merely observes. Orwell's animal revolutionaries have no perception of a Koestlerian "Third Order" or spiritual world; the vision of Moses the raven concerning Sugarcandy Mountain, an exception to this, is confined to one paragraph and is received contemptuously by the pigs (Orwell 1945: 99-100). Moreover, the raven is absent for the revolution and its immediate aftermath. "The real problem is how to restore the religious attitude while accepting death as final" said Orwell of Koestler in 1944 (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 281). That Koestler should espouse a spiritual approach is in keeping with his own experiences in the jail in Seville.

In short, Rubashov's guilt and the so-called "theory of confessions" is best analysed in terms of a spiritual reading of the Grammatical Fiction: the "silent partner" acts as Confessor, and the death of Rubashov becomes a means of atoning for his sins. Certainly, it is evident that Rubashov's dialogues with the Grammatical Fiction have given him an increased sense of awareness of the numinous:

"Why had not the Public Prosecutor asked him 'Defendant Rubashov, what about the infinite?' He would not have been able to answer - and there, there lay the real source of his guilt...Could there be a greater?" (Koestler 1940: 257)

The spiritual dimension to Rubashov's ethic is also tacitly acknowledged by Ivanov himself:

" 'In a moment you will be calling out, Get thee behind me, Satan.' " (Koestler 1940: 149)

The semi-autobiographical element is in evidence again, for the

Grammatical Fiction is implicit in Koestler's experience of Third Order, the world of infinity beyond logical reasoning which sustained Koestler in Seville now beckoning Rubashov to see beyond his immediate circumstances. Thus, Rubashov wishes to study astronomy if he were to be reprieved at the last minute. Thus too the "shrug of eternity" that marks the end of Rubashov and indeed the book itself.

But it must be said that there is no trace of the Grammatical Fiction in any account of the Show Trials. Bukharin's widow has shed light on the motives behind her husband's confession that are redolent of Krivitsky's review of events, putting on record her husband's belief that his Bolshevism still offered hope for the future and was by no means a matter of self-deception.²⁰

It is therefore Rubashov's revelation, clearly not shared by his real-life counterpart, with its hints of Franciscan stigmata (Rubashov's toothache always anticipates the return of the Grammatical Fiction), that makes the political analysis of Browne, Bukovsky and even Orwell inadequate and leads us, as Koestler intended, into the arena of ethics and personal morals.

Political ethics

Central to Koestler's exposure of the fallacy of revolutionary ethics is Ivanov's argument that "the principle that the end justifies the means is and remains the only rule of political ethics" (Koestler 1940: 156). Koestler maintains that there are two basic systems of ethics: (a) Christian/humane ethics - the individual is sacrosanct. The rules of arithmetic may be applicable in ethics insofar as humanity is considered as an abstract term, but, as Rubashov realised in his final few hours in the cell, mathematical principles cannot be applied to human units.

(b) The collective aim justifies all means. This system demands that the individual is subordinated and sacrificed to the community. In

²⁰See BBC, *The People's Century*, 1995 for an interview with Bukharin's widow in which she testifies that her husband wrote to her from prison requesting that their children be brought up as Bolsheviks.

Ivanov's consequential logic, the starvation of millions can be justified by the health of generations yet unborn - historical necessity being the argument for the sacrifice of those who are living. The evidence of Krivitsky and Bukharin's widow suggests that this consequential logic may still have retained its appeal to Bukharin and the others who confessed, by persuading them that the death of a few thousand Old Bolsheviks might in the long run facilitate the creation of a truly socialist state.

Certainly this latter consequential ethic seemed in the prevailing *Weltanschauung* to be unavoidable; nor was it confined to Stalinist Russia. George Orwell's review of *Spanish Testament* could have been written by an Ivanov or Gletkin:

"...if someone drops a bomb on your mother, go and drop two bombs on his mother. The only apparent alternatives are to smash dwelling houses to powder, blow out human entrails and burn holes in children with lumps of thermite, or to be enslaved by people who are more ready to do these things than you are yourself; as yet, no-one has suggested a practical way out." (Orwell 1938)

The "consequent logic" ethic - the ends justifies the means - that Koestler had seen in Stalinism was now put into the character of Ivanov and Gletkin. Of course, he had once believed in this ethical system himself and may have shared Orwell's pessimism that there was no practical solution. Rubashov's diary at the beginning of the Second Hearing bears striking resemblance to Koestler's own thoughts in his years with the Communist Party. Claiming that "nothing really important has been said about the rules of political ethics" since Machiavelli's *Prince*, Rubashov notes in his diary that "we were the first to replace the nineteenth century's liberal ethics of 'fair play' by the revolutionary ethics of the twentieth century." (Koestler 1940: 97)

The ethic has an almost mathematical foundation in which politics and history itself are seen as algebraic equations. There is no avoiding the mathematical allusions throughout the novel - the mathematics of logic that had first been seen in Lentulus' percentages of survival for *The Gladiators* in the arena. Thus, early in his imprisonment Rubashov muses that one day the ideas of Number One would be taught by means of tables of statistics, and politics would be reduced to algebraic formulae (Koestler 1940: 17), an idea reinforced in the First Hearing

by Ivanov:

"In our case, x stands for the anonymous masses, the people. Politics mean operating with this x without worrying about its actual nature. Making history is to recognise x for what it stands for in the equation." (Koestler 1940: 84)

Bukovsky's analysis confirms the mathematical logic of Stalin's revolutionary ethic, tracing the origin of the purges to a memorandum by Lenin to the Politburo of 10 February 1922 - victory will justify temporary cruelty; the harder it is to achieve an end, the greater the number of sacrifices which have to be made and the more terrible the means justified. The mathematical argument almost becomes an end in itself (the essence of Rubashov's argument against Gletkin) as demonstrated in Lenin's memorandum:

"...the larger the number of members of the reactionary bourgeoisie and reactionary clergy we are able to shoot under these auspices the better" (quoted in Bukovsky 1980: 12)

The role of the Grammatical Fiction

Arlova had been merely a factor in the equation; it is the suffering of an individual (Bogrov, former sailor on Battleship Potemkin, Commander of the Eastern Fleet) that unbalances the logical equation for Rubashov and reinforces the claims made by the inner voice, the Grammatical Fiction. Nor was this discovery pure fiction:

"When you had heard those shouts and they ring in your ear, then you realise that one of the basic tenets of one type of politics, that the end justifies the means, has become unacceptable." (Koestler 1974: 155)

The Grammatical Fiction makes itself felt "answering vibrations", as if, in Koestler's words, a tuning-fork has been struck, and evokes synaesthetic memories (Arlova's scent, for example) that continue to tilt the equation in favour of the individual, the Grammatical Fiction or "I", against the collective needs of the Party.

The revolutionary ethic is thus found wanting because the mathematical logic of Gletkin is operating on the wrong dimension. The mathematical symbols depersonalise the individuals involved. This was a fictionalisation of the all-too real Communist mathematical logic that Orwell and Koestler had seen at first hand in Spain ("if someone

drops one bomb...go and drop two bombs") and which could even affect Allied thinking in the war, as Orwell was soon to reflect in his diary.

"The authorities in Canada have now chained up a number of German prisoners equal to the number of British prisoners chained up in Germany. What the devil are we coming to?" (OA7/4: 13)

Rubashov had sought to live his whole life within the confines of such a mathematical system, and only in his last few days had asked the question "What the devil are we coming to?" For in attempting to follow the Law of Detours to the end, he had allowed his friends to be sacrificed for the greater good of the Party and suspended all feelings of compassion in the process. In other words, Rubashov had taken the path that Spartacus had not been prepared to take: he had obeyed the Law of Detours.

But the emergence of the Grammatical Fiction compounded Rubashov's deep guilt; by admitting to "an error...in the whole mathematical system of thought" (Koestler 1942: 242) and the existence of the "I", that previously unacceptable figure in the account book, Rubashov discovers for himself a higher ethic and a code of self-sacrifice beyond the mathematical logic of the Party. This was Koestler's conclusion, of course, in the cell in Seville where he had initially sought solace in mathematics and thus discovered a higher dimension in the so-called *doctrine* of the Third Order.

Beloff sees Koestler's acceptance of the Third Order as evidence of his mystical nature (Beloff 1975: 81-82). But there is no evidence of the mystic's "oceanic sense" being the natural conclusion of the detour followed by Rubashov other than the merest hint, in the novel's final paragraph, that death may not necessarily mean a total cessation of Rubashov's existence²¹.

The error was, according to Rubashov, simply in believing that the

²¹ "There was the sea again with its sounds. A wave slowly lifted him up. It came from afar and travelled sedately on, a shrug of eternity." (Koestler 1940: 267). It is rather odd that Orwell's recollection of Rubashov's last memory is "the leaves of poplar trees on his father's estate" (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 277) but, whether it was poplar trees or the sea, a similar argument can be constructed along the lines offered by Orwell: namely that Rubashov's inner strength came from boyhood memories and these form the basis of the book's final paragraph, rather than any mystical experience of infinity.

ends justifies the means. "It was this sentence which had killed the great fraternity of the Revolution and made them all run amuck." (Koestler 1940: 242) Rubashov firmly believed that a new system, of knowing both Ivanov's mathematical logic (the Neanderthals and their numbered beads) and the oceanic sense of the mystic, might be developed, and it was this conclusion that first hints at the Koestlerian notion of the holon that was to figure in later work:

"Perhaps they will teach that the tenet is wrong which says that a man is the product of one million divided by one million, and will introduce a new kind of arithmetic based on multiplication [which]...will develop a consciousness and an individuality of its own." (Koestler 1940: 260-261)

Note - "a new kind of arithmetic", in other words a rational system, rather than a mystical or "Third Order" system was Rubashov's solution.

Rubashov finally becomes the Moses figure hinted at in the conversation in the exercise-yard with the peasant at the end of the Third Hearing. He remembers the allusion to the Exodus in his final conversation with Gletkin; for the choice, as Rubashov perceived it, was straightforward: either return to the mathematical logic of the Party and the relative security it offered or go forward to create a new system of values that took account of a higher dimension. The new ethical system was clearly no more or less than a Promised Land²². These, at least, are Rubashov's last thoughts, tinged with irony at the fact that he had not been taken to the top of the mountain and still saw nothing but desert and the darkness of night. He is "confronted by absolute nothingness" (Koestler 1940: 251), the Law of Detours having taken him down a cul-de-sac of introspection from which there was no escape other than confession.

That Bukharin and the others had not shared the insights offered by discourse with the Grammatical Fiction is immaterial because *Darkness...* makes it abundantly clear that no easy vocabulary exists by which the "I" can be identified, let alone reconciled with the revolutionary ethic espoused by the Gletkins and Ivanovs of this world.

²²The fact that it is Moses rather than Christ that Koestler uses in his analogy adds weight to the argument of some Koestlerian scholars that he was strongly influenced by his Jewish background (see Goldstein 1992), and to some extent contradicts Koestler's own first category of *Christian/humane* ethics.

Rees concludes his examination of the Grammatical Fiction by arguing that the distinction between the objective and subjective is impossible to make, but notes too that the distortion of historical material by Koestler is perfectly justifiable. In other words, Rubashov's attempt to solve the mathematical equation, or (in Rees' analogy) to balance the profit and loss figures of the accounts of his life by introducing the "I", is perfectly plausible and may well be the only rational explanation of an otherwise inexplicable series of confessions - inexplicable, unless you accept the alternative conclusion of one reader and merely say "Ah, but the Russians are different" (George 1941: 18).

Koestler himself saw the novel as the perfect foil to *The Gladiators*, an examination of what would happen if the Law of Detours was followed to its end. The moral and emotional bankruptcy that engulfs Rubashov in his final hours is indicative that Rubashov has been forced by the Grammatical Fiction to ditch the pure reason of the scientific revolutionary and the argument of historic necessity. But in favour of what?

The obvious conclusion is that at the time of writing Koestler "comes near to claiming that revolutions are of their nature bad" as Orwell suggests (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 277). Koestler, like Rubashov, had suffered a total loss of faith; if revolutions were doomed to the corruption and cruelty of the mathematically-minded, what hope was there?

Koestler needed to explore the revolutionary ethic from a fresh angle, one that would make another attempt to balance the two sides of the equation, the collective necessity of history and the freedom and worth of the individual.

1.iv. ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Peter Slavek

Arrival and Departure concerns a young man, Peter Slavek, who has

escaped from the Nazis to arrive in "Neutralia", where he has an affair with a French girl (Odette) before suffering a nervous breakdown. Peter is then psychoanalysed by Dr Sonia Bolgar, for whom Peter's heroism is no more or less than a mechanism of atonement, a means of dealing with his guilt. Dr Bolgar probes into his past in an attempt to explain his revolutionary actions; layer after layer of guilt is peeled away as Sonia seeks to provide a logical explanation of the revolutionary ethic. He is persuaded by Sonia to adopt the way of expediency and renounce his revolutionary heroism by travelling to the safety of America. But as he boards ship, the young man realises that the option of staying and fighting Nazism is almost compulsive; in what is rather clumsy symmetry, the book ends as it begins with Peter jumping - the parachute-jump heralding Peter's departure for an unknown fate in the resistance movement, still unsure of the ethical values or meaning behind his heroism.

Just as Rubashov is outwardly modelled on Bukharin, Peter is modelled on the figure of Endre Havas, a Hungarian poet and close friend of the author. But as in *Darkness...*, Koestler makes use of his own experiences: Neutralia could quite easily be Portugal, and Peter's time there coincides almost to the day with the duration of Koestler's period in Lisbon prior to his journey (also by aeroplane) to non-neutral territory (England), Koestler also having first explored the option of applying for a Visa to neutral (pre-Pearl Harbour) America. Indeed, a screenplay examined and approved by Koestler set the film of the novel not in "Neutralia" but in "Lisbon, Portugal 1941."²³

Andrews, the disfigured pilot, is based on Richard Hillary, the subject of an essay Koestler wrote contemporaneously with *Arrival and Departure*; the inspiration for Bernard came from Fritz Burde, Koestler's immediate superior in the Red Army Intelligence service (Koestler 1954a: 17); Sonia also has a counterpart in real life although Koestler refused to disclose her identity to his

²³Hoffman, R. *Arrival and Departure: Adapted from the novel by Arthur Koestler*. Typescript. MS 2317/2: 2.

biographer²⁴; and even Peter's hysterical paralysis had been observed, Koestler later remarked, by the author in Seville jail (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 30).

But once again any semi-autobiographical detail should not cloud the purpose behind the novel.

"Its central theme is the conflict between morality and expediency. In the two previous novels, I was mainly concerned with its impact on history; here, I have tried to transpose it into terms of individual psychology." (Koestler 1966b: 190)

Thus Webberley traces Koestler's concern with freedom and determinism from a concrete issue (Spartacus) to the less concrete (Rubashov) and finally to a philosophical level (Webberley 1975: 7). What Peter Slavek gains at the end of the novel, according to Webberley, is freedom from psychological determinism - a phenomenon that Koestler was to wage war against for the rest of his life.

But the psychotherapy practised by Sonia should not be taken as an attack on Freudianism, just as *Darkness...* is not simply an attack on Marxism. The fallacy of Sonia's method is essentially the fallacy of Gletkin's revolutionary ethics. Sonia believes in reducing courage to first principles of a mathematical-anatomical nature (mathematics and anatomy having been employed together to describe the mind of Number One) just as Ivanov and Gletkin had postulated (Koestler 1943: 114); Peter seems to have taken Rubashov's advice - the novel suggests at one point that the two revolutionary heroes inhabit the same world, possibly known to each other through the intermediary, Raditsch (Koestler 1943: 97) - and studied astronomy to find order:

"He felt the exultation of his early student days, when he had suddenly grasped the principle of Kepler's laws of planetary movement and the chaotic world around him was tamed, and transformed, into an orderly, harmonious system." (Koestler 1943: 123)

Koestler thus uses the novel to demonstrate that at the heart of Peter's heroism lies a core beyond the reach of cause and effect that cannot be influenced by rational argument, just as the Grammatical Fiction cannot be explained using the vocabulary of the revolutionary. At this core of human existence lie the ethical absolutes, imperatives

²⁴Interview with Iain Hamilton, 5 March 1974. MS 2436/5.

that "cannot be invalidated by reducing them to factors operating on a different level" (Koestler 1966b: 190). Sonia, like Ivanov and Gletkin before her, fails in the task of rationalising and exonerating the revolutionary ethic.

"In the type of psychotherapy practised by Sonia there is no provision made for ethical absolutes; its aim is to make the patient accept reality; and if the reality is that of Europe in 1942, it cannot be helped." (Koestler 1966b: 190)

Koestler's thesis was the irreducibility of ethical values; this may seem reasonable enough now but in 1943, Koestler admitted, it ran counter to the prevailing climate of Freudianism, Marxism and Behaviourism. The central problem of 'ends and means' had not been resolved in a logical manner, but *that was precisely the point Koestler sought to make*; just as Rubashov had been confronted by a flaw in the mathematical equation, so Peter finds ultimately that rationalism is a dead end.

Not surprisingly, Orwell missed the point, claiming that Koestler had made Peter suffer a "loss of intelligence" at the conclusion of the novel.

"The real problem is how to restore the religious attitude while accepting death as final. Men can only be happy when they do not assume the object of life is happiness. It is most unlikely, however, that Koestler would accept this. There is a well-marked hedonistic strain in his writing,.... Therefore he draws the conclusion: This is what revolutions lead to." (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 281-282)

Hamilton uses the conclusion of the same essay - "All revolutions are failures, but they are not the same failures" - to argue that Orwell was intent on providing an intelligent reconciliation between revolutionary ethics and individual conscience, perhaps in the form of an English form of socialism - a belief he was to abandon in due course when he came to write *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Hamilton 1982: 87)²⁵.

²⁵However, we can now date the outline for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to 1943 - the novel then having the embryonic title *The Quick and the Dead* (Crick 1980: 407-409) - with at least part of a first draft written in 1946 (Davison (ed) 1984: ix-xiv). Orwellian scholars would now dispute the "reconciliation" theory or the notion that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was the product of depressive illness. Rather, Orwell and Koestler were in fact exploring Connolly's "revolution betrayed" thesis at precisely the same time. They both foresaw an increase in totalitarianism during the war and indeed their similar ethical



It would have been more accurate for Orwell to accuse his friend of a sudden loss of *rationality* for that is the essence of the Koestler-Peter conundrum. V. S. Pritchett, a lifelong critic of Koestler, chooses to focus upon the "pornographic" qualities of Peter's torture (the same charge would be levelled against Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: Lindsay 1956: 95-97), claiming that the novel is an attack on belief itself.

But Pritchett makes the fundamental error of thinking that Peter concludes by agreeing to Sonia's analysis that 'The Cause' is nothing more than a psychological aberration; the point is that the "agreement" is as superficial as Rubashov's "confession". Koestler uses the experiences of his fictional hero, Peter, to explore the *possibility* that ethics can be explained by psychological traits, but Sonia's method only proves that "reasons do not matter so much" (Koestler 1943: 176). Belief, indeed faith itself, remains intact and is, if anything, the stronger for Koestler's probing analysis even if the irrationality of Peter's behaviour was so baffling to Orwell and Pritchett.

The ethics of individualism

Koestler was, by 1943, well on the way to becoming involved in practical ethics on two fronts. Firstly, he was increasingly preoccupied with exploring practical methods by which he might support friends imprisoned and tortured under the totalitarian regimes of Stalin and Hitler. Thus, he produced various film scripts for the Ministry of Information, such as "Lift Your Heads Comrades" and "The Race Film", and a further two scripts for BBC radio, "Protective Custody" and "Black Gallery" (MS 2340/2; MS 2340/3²⁶). The utilisation of writers such as Koestler and Orwell indicates the seriousness by which the Government and the BBC perceived propaganda

positions led to a collaboration that was of great significance for Koestler in 1946 (see Chapter 2 below). It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that Orwell was not satisfied that Koestler had properly addressed the issue of "the revolution betrayed" with the publication of *Arrival and Departure*.

²⁶Incorrectly catalogued in the Koestler Archive as pre-war material.

(but for a fuller discussion, see Tyndall 1992: 100-107). The insertion of the "Mixed Transport" account in *Arrival and Departure*, for example, does little to further the argument against the revolutionary ethic, nor does it add to the plot of the novel; but Koestler had heard only weeks earlier from a Polish writer of the fate suffered by Jews in Poland and inserted the account after the Polish writer's broadcast had been criticised as sensationalist.

Secondly, Koestler was taking a keen interest in the Palestinian problem, a natural preoccupation given his Jewish background.

Peter Slavek represents the end of Koestler's exploration of the revolutionary ethic. What had begun as an historical analysis with *Spartacus* had moved to a more contemporary and finally psychological level with Peter's heroism. In the process, Koestler had reinstated the value of the individual ethic against the mathematical logic of the revolution.

Yet there is new evidence to suggest that Koestler had not been totally satisfied with the trilogy as it stood. Did he feel the need to respond to Orwell's accusation of a sudden loss of intelligence? He certainly seemed aware that the ideas expressed in *Darkness...* and *Arrival...* had been less than clear. But then, he wrote, "the times were not exactly conducive to a clear crystallisation of ideas" (MS 2372/4: 224).

In addition, the author also faced an impassioned plea at the end of 1943 to "compose a moving appeal to the public at large for Youth Aliyah" (a movement for the rescue of Jewish children from countries of oppression and their rehabilitation in Palestine). The many letters from Mrs Vera Weizmann to Koestler found the latter not unresponsive to the idea of such an appeal. The two were to meet frequently in the early months of 1944 to discuss Koestler's contribution to the cause (MS 2305).

However, Koestler was not sure "if he was up to the task"; reminded of the good job he had done of describing the transport of Jews in the gas vans in *Arrival...*, Mrs Weizmann then suggested an appeal to Jews and non-Jews

"to save our children against whom the world has so sadly and blatantly sinned. Were I a Christian, I would say: let the

suffering children come to me." (MS 2371/1: 7)

What emerged from these meetings and exchange of letters was *Arrival and Departure II*, for there is little doubt in my mind, given the dates of the correspondence and meetings and the dates of the working manuscript, that the sequel to *Arrival...* and the inspiration for the rescue of David by Peter was, at least in part, Koestler's response to Youth Aliyah and its need for publicity.

The novel took up six months of Koestler's busy war-time schedule, from 21 November 1943 to 23 June 1944, and described Peter's mission for the Resistance following his *volte-face* at the end of *Arrival and Departure*. He hoped that the conclusions implied in this work would be less disappointing to his readers. (MS 2372/4: 224)

The handwritten draft of the unfinished work runs to some eighty pages, of which twenty three and a synopsis also exist in revised typescript form (MS 2317/2: see Appendix 1). No reference to the work has been found by this author in the two Koestler bibliographies or in the archival research of Tyndall and Goldstein.

Once again, Koestler was not averse to drawing upon his own experiences: the description of the balloon redolent of Koestler's Arctic adventure on the *Graf Zeppelin*, Peter's post with the Board of Psychological and Ethical Warfare mirroring much of Koestler's army work, and importantly the feeling of helplessness it engendered. Although certain themes are repeated from the earlier novel, such as the "Jerusalem" rabbit story (with a more optimistic gloss upon the conclusion) and repeated descriptions of the mixed transports, the novel is much more Kafkaesque than anything written by Koestler before or since.

Its importance in an ethical analysis of Koestler's work, however, lies in the clear indication that Peter *still felt guilty* about his past and found it impossible to believe in himself. Once again, the stars indicate to Peter the immutable 'destiny from above' that his heroism had sought to change but could not; at the beginning of the novel, even the Grammatical Fiction seems beyond Peter's reach and the short-term pessimism associated with Koestler re-emerges stronger than ever.

"He [Peter] was cut off from the subterranean communion with a force he could not name, and left shivering and alone; the stars had suddenly become paler, the immense night had shrunk and closed in around him like walls; his lost shadow had returned and lain down at his feet. Grace had been withdrawn, death re-gained (*sic*) its sting. He was condemned to hope again." (MS 2317/2: 3)

There is surely no more telling statement of the individual ethic in Koestler's (or indeed, any writer's) work than the conclusion "Grace had been withdrawn...He was condemned to hope again."

The saving of Rachel

"The immense night had shrunk and closed in..." Darkness at Noon had returned. His own guilt and uncertainty is countered by a Greek Orthodox priest, Father Zlatko, (a rare occurrence of a religious figure in Koestler's work), whose heroism was based on real-life events that had come to the author's attention, possibly through Youth Aliyah and Mrs Weizmann. Thus in February 1944, Koestler wrote to Father Dickinson asking for more information about the priest.

"The story is based on facts which I heard: an unnamed priest, after the destruction of the monastery in which he had lived for about fifteen years, took refuge in a small town somewhere in the Balkans, and saved the lives of several Jewish children doomed to 'physical liquidation'." (MS 2372/4: 150)

Father Zlatko hears Peter's confession and then, with young Rachel - a name later linked by Koestler in his "Laban's sheep" analogy with his years of Communism (Koestler 1954a: 392) - he is introduced to the grotesque tiny creature, David, rescued by Father Zlatka from starvation. Zlatko's conversations with Peter are the means by which Koestler attempts to spell out with the clarity he thought lacking in earlier novels the indivisible nature of the ethical imperative, opposed to the mathematics of revolutionary logic. The story Zlatka uses is Abraham's bargaining with God over Sodom.

"Now there are two kinds of people. There are those who are disgusted with Abraham's haggling and think that the Lord was very patient with him, and side with the Lord. Those are the people who have righteousness but no love. But there is the other kind, who are on Abraham's side. They understand that numbers do not count, and that one ounce of goodness may redeem a hundred tons of wickedness, because God's creatures cannot be weighed against each other on a fishmonger's scale." (MS 2317/2: 23)

"Numbers do not count..." On the cover of the typed manuscript, Koestler has written in pencil, *Amo, ergo sum*: I love, therefore I am. Peter's loss of *rationalism* is certainly sharper than in the previous novel; nor would Pritchett have found in the sequel much evidence of the "pornography" of physical torture, or an attack on belief itself. On the contrary, the priest's faith helps Peter re-evaluate his own motives.

From Koestler's notes on the plot, we know that he intended Peter to save Rachel after the death of David and the arrest of Father Zlatka: "the saving of Rachel" is the most important *leitmotif* of the story (MS 2317/2: Addendum, Plate 3).

The manuscript is also proof that Koestler had begun to think of the diametrically opposed systems of "Yogi-ethics" and "Commissar-ethics" outlined in his recent (June 1942) essay, *The Yogi and the Commissar*. His notes (Plate 3) suggest that later in the novel he intended to introduce another character, Cyril, "as a Yogi", almost certainly based on Koestler's friend and the publisher of *Horizon*, Cyril Connolly. Cyril's meditative experiences were to be more of a "temptation" than a solution to the practical problems to which Peter addressed himself.

In summary, the novel was intended as a "synthesis of ratio[nality] with enhanced awareness of suffering", with Peter's love for David and Rachel balanced by the pragmatism of the disillusioned priest. If, in the earlier works, Koestler had exposed the fallacy of Commissar-ethics, and had begun to think of Yogi-ethics - the voice of the Grammatical Fiction - as the solution to the ends and means dilemma, then this unpublished work clearly demonstrates that neither approach was deemed satisfactory.

The suffering of David

It was typical of Koestler, however, to explore fully this avenue before looking elsewhere for a solution, if only because Orwell had maintained at the outset that *Arrival and Departure* was a blind alley, and that his friend still believed that the Earthly Paradise was both desirable and possible (although it would be more accurate to suggest

that *The Gladiators* marks the end of Koestler's utopian dream). Orwell's comment, upon reviewing *Arrival and Departure*, that suffering is an inevitable fact of human life so that the choice before man is "always a choice of evils" is precisely the point made in the sequel: Rachel is saved at the cost of her starving young brother's life.

The importance of the individual and the necessity of love is seen more clearly in these manuscripts than anywhere else in Koestler's oeuvre. The sacrifice of Father Zlatko and the "decisive hour" of Peter and his concern for these strangers who had taken him into their trust speak of love and hope for the future.

"The picture of the human situation that emerges from the novels" wrote Kettle summing up Koestler's work with that of Orwell, Huxley and Greene, "is in the last degree unhopeful" (Kettle 1953: 166). Whilst that may be true of the published trilogy of novels, it is hard to see how that could apply to Peter's saving of Rachel and the compassion of Zlatko. I love, therefore I am. Kettle's analogy with Macbeth (see p. 29 above) - in Shakespeare, Kettle argued, it is Macbeth, not Scotland that is damned; the inference being that in Koestler and Orwell, society is damned - may be applicable to the society that exonerates the Law of Detours and the revolutionary ethic, but cannot be applied to *Arrival and Departure II*.

Koestler suffered from severe mental depression in the summer of 1944, a fact that was incidentally to lead to the rewriting of *Twilight Bar* (see Chapter 2 below). Under such a cloud, made worse by the absence of Mamaime Paget, whom he had met in Connolly's flat in January of that year, writing was not easy. Such was his depression that, with the exception of *Twilight Bar*, written in six weeks and completed on 15 August, he found the progress of *Arrival and Departure II* almost impossible due to these "violent depressive interruptions"²⁷. He confided in his diary: "...not knowing whether I can write at all". The preparations involved in a visit to Palestine must have come as a welcome relief to a writer who thought he might never write a novel

²⁷See Koestler's diary entry for 29 June 1944. Hamilton makes no mention of Koestler's breakdown, probably because Koestler himself did not allow Hamilton access to the diaries.

again.

Secondly, Koestler may have been influenced by Jonathan Cape's advice of March 1944 that he should collect various articles into a book which would give his readers "an extremely good follow-up to *Arrival and Departure*." (MS 2373/1: 203). In fact, Koestler had already thought of such an idea the previous year, even listing the possible contents of such a collection in his diary (MS 2305). At the same time, he was already beginning to formulate ideas for a theory of laughter, making notes for *Insight and Outlook*. Thus the sequel to *Arrival and Departure* was put aside. Perhaps a vestige of guilt remained for Koestler as it did for Peter in this unfinished work?

"'Now he will die', he [Zlatko] went on, 'and it is my fault. My fault, and your fault.'" (MS 2317/2: 19)

Koestler, in immersing himself in the Palestinian cause and the suffering of his people, had finally laid to rest the ghost of the revolutionary ethics of Gletkin and Ivanov. But the dramatisation of what had once seemed to be a problem of mathematics or astronomy, in this aborted story of Rachel and David, must have been a painful experience and one that led to yet deeper involvement in the Palestinian movement, a cause that was to occupy much of his time in the aftermath of the 'revolutionary ethics' trilogy.

In the immediate future, however, Peter's story was abandoned and Koestler set about compiling *The Yogi and the Commissar*.

1.v. THE YOGI AND THE COMMISSAR

The Yogi and the Commissar I

The volume, when published, took its eponymous title from an essay first published by Cyril Connolly in the influential review magazine *Horizon* in June 1942 - i.e. after the publication of *Darkness...* but before *Arrival...* Koestler felt he owed a great debt to Connolly for introducing him to "the *Horizon* crowd". Connolly had also recently published an extract from the (then) unfinished *Arrival and Departure* relating to the "mixed transport" episode, which resulted in Koestler

receiving many letters accusing him of a morbid imagination (Hamilton 1982: 79). If Koestler wanted to set down his ethical and political beliefs as they stood at the time, *Horizon* was the natural choice for an important essay.

Yet the content has not merited serious study by Koestlerian scholars. Webberley comments it is "crucial and neglected" (Webberley 1975: 8); Calder, Atkins and Carlet ignore the essays in favour of the novels; and Hamilton confines his treatment of the essay's reception to a single page of the 397-page biography. Only Orwell gives *The Yogi...* the attention it undoubtedly merits, but even that was three years after its original publication.

In *The Yogi...*, Koestler sets out the themes he had been exploring in his novels. Essay and novel complement one another, and an examination of *The Yogi...* will allow us critically to evaluate the ethics of Spartacus, Rubashov and Peter removed from the concrete situations of the novels. Indeed, the essay strengthens the argument that Koestler's ethical thinking progressed from the historical and autobiographical to the philosophical, whilst retaining the consistency of the "ends and means" theme, as Koestler later acknowledged in the preface to the collected essays in 1945:

"Since my school-days I have not ceased to marvel each year at the fool I had been the year before. Each year brought its own revelation, and each time I could only think with shame and rage of the opinions I had held...but lately the new revelations, instead of shattering and destroying all that went before, seem to combine into a pattern sufficiently elastic to absorb the new material and yet with a certain consistency in its basic features." (Koestler 1945a: 7-8)

Koestler's ethical spectrum

Central to a proper understanding of Koestler's ethics is the concept of a spectrum, introduced by Koestler at the beginning of the essay. Human behaviour is akin to the dazzling yet impenetrable light of the sun's rays, and as such does not lend itself to critical analysis of its component parts. Koestler asks us to imagine an instrument not unlike Newton's glass prism "which would enable us to break up patterns of social behaviour to diffract the spectrum of all possible human

attitudes to life" (Koestler 1945a: 9).

At the infra-red end of the spectrum, Koestler places the Commissar. He believes in "Change from Without", a radical reorganisation of social life that can only take place by revolution. Whatever the means, this reorganisation of life and the harmony it will create always justifies the means, however violent. There is a mathematical logic to the Commissar, for whom reasoning "is an unfailing compass and the universe a kind of very large clockwork" (Koestler 1945a: 9).

At the opposite - i.e. ultra-violet - end of the spectrum lies the Yogi who believes in "Change from Within". There is no easy mathematical way of understanding the universe for the Yogi, and consequently the End is always unpredictable. The Means alone count. Understandably, given such uncertainties, the Yogi rejects violence, believing instead that

"each individual is alone but attached to the all-one by an invisible umbilical cord...and that his only task during his earthly life is to avoid any action, emotion or thought which might lead to a breaking of the cord." (Koestler 1945a: 10)

Koestler admits that these are the two extreme poles of human behaviour, and that most human attitudes lie in the middle bands of the spectrum. Nevertheless, the opposite poles of the spectrum provide a useful if simplistic means of understanding the "ends and means" debate and, according to Koestler, demonstrated why the practical political arguments of the day seemed to him to be futile.

"You can argue with post-war planners, Fabians, Quakers, Liberals and Philanthropists. But the argument will lead nowhere, for the real issue remains between the Yogi and the Commissar, between the fundamental conceptions of Change from Without and Change from Within." (Koestler 1945a: 10)

What is required, he argues, is a synthesis between the saint (the Yogi) and the revolutionary (the Commissar). But this has never been achieved: compromise, Koestler states, is not the same as synthesis. All attempts to change the nature of man by Commissar methods had thus far failed "from Spartacus' Sun State through Inquisition and Reformation to Soviet Russia" (Koestler 1945a: 11).

Koestler then goes on to ask the question he had earlier addressed in *The Gladiators* and *Darkness...*: why had such attempts ended in failure? The Law of Detours, in which it is posited that for revolution to

succeed, the revolutionary must avoid any detours of compassion or individual concern for the good of the group at *all costs*, is expressed in different guise in *The Yogi...* in keeping with the scientific language of the essay, by the Antimony of the Serpentine.

The Antimony of the Serpentine

Utopia is compared to a high mountain peak. For those who aspire to reach its lofty grandeur, a direct route would be impossibly steep; therefore, one takes a serpentine path so that one never actually faces the peak head-on. The problem lies not in the route itself but in the sheer numbers of people following their revolutionary leader.

"If a great mass of people are pushing forward along the serpentine they will, according to the fatal laws of inertia, push their leader off the road and then follow him, the whole movement flying off at a tangent into the nowhere." (Koestler 1945a: 11)

The inference, as in *The Gladiators*, is that revolutions fail because of a lack of communication: those at the head of the trail failing to communicate their goal, or indeed the pace of revolution, to their impatient followers. On this rewriting of the Law of Detours, there is a greater sense of shared responsibility for the detours that prevent the revolutionaries reaching Utopia: one presumes that a more co-ordinated society of slaves would have accepted the need for discipline so that the crucifixions of the dissidents would be ruthlessly completed.

Yet a more cautious approach is also not without problems according to this law, for the danger of a more co-ordinated march at a slower pace to Utopia is that ultimately all upward momentum is lost. In such circumstances, the upward spiral towards the peak merely becomes a circle that does not gain height.

The Antimony of the Slopes

The second root cause of all revolutionary failure by Commissar methods is what Koestler terms "the Antimony of the Slopes". This is simply another way of saying that either the means are subordinated to

the end or *vice versa*. You can argue that your own particular cause accepts both are important, but there comes a point when a practical decision has to be taken and then, according to Koestler, you must choose one way or the other. Once you have chosen you are on the slope.

One can apply this to the revolutionary ethic of Gletkin and Ivanov: once they had chosen to give the ends a greater importance than the means, then their other arguments - the sacrifice of the starving thousands now is necessary for the greater good of the millions later; to be ruthless now will shorten the struggle - inevitably follow, and Rubashov finds (for a time) that the sacrifice of Arlova makes perfect sense.

The importance of these two laws, as expressed in *The Yogi...*, is not that they provide a simplified rewriting of the ethical laws of the first two novels, but that they are general laws applicable at both ends of the spectrum and not solely concerned with the historical or semi-autobiographical situations that preoccupied Koestler during this period.

Thus, Koestler now argues, the Yogi also finds the peak of Utopia equally elusive: "whenever an attempt was made to organize saintliness by exterior means, the organizers were caught in the same dilemmas." (Koestler 1945a: 12). Inquisition, established for the good of the Church at a time when heresy was threatening the very stability of the Christian faith, "flew off at a tangent"; and the Church in the liberal era "circle[s] round and round the peak without gaining height". As for the Antimony of the Slopes, this is demonstrated in Koestler's analysis by Gandhi's choice of non-violence: once the means take over, the end is inevitably lost, as non-violence degenerates to non-resistance. Koestler calls the Yogi's approach "inverted Machiavellianism" that is no better than the ruthless approach of the Commissar: "the Yogi and the Commissar may call it quits" (Koestler 1945a: 12).

Of course, Koestler continues, they don't call it quits but unable to form a synthesis, they attract and repel each other at rhythmical intervals.

The spectrum in motion

One of the fundamental tenets of Koestler's ethics is that the spectrum is constantly in motion - "one of the more exciting aspects of History which Marxism, otherwise the most serviceable guide, falls short of explaining" (Koestler 1945a: 13). At different periods of history, there is a strong pull towards one or the other end of the spectrum. Like other writers of his generation, Koestler frequently refers to the 1930s as "the pink decade", in which Commissar-ethics dominated. Clearly, Koestler reflected upon his own past as inhabiting the Commissar end of the spectrum; yet he also felt that he "belonged" (Koestler 1945a: 13) to the ultra-violent end, in which quasi-religious and mystical values dominate: further evidence that suggests Rubashov's Theory of Confessions is best understood by accepting the reality of the Third Order.

Koestler detected that, such was the disillusionment of the failed revolutionary ethic, a general displacement was taking place in which the emphasis was again shifting towards the Yogi end of the spectrum. The spectral displacement was achieved too quickly and too glibly by many writers for Koestler's taste, and the essay reflects his disgust of those who change their allegiance too quickly. But another fundamental tenet of the Yogi-Commissar spectrum is that the Commissar finds such "spectral displacement" more difficult, for he is defined as "the human type which has completely severed relations with the subconscious" (Koestler 1945a: 14).

Koestler's overt criticism of the Commissar's dilemma and his "climate of perpetual adolescence" is more than merely a loathing of his own revolutionary past. It goes some way towards explaining the gulf in thinking between Ivanov and Rubashov, or Peter and Sonia, in addition to elucidating the reality of the Third Order. At the heart of the Commissar's dilemma is a severed connection between the umbilical cord that connects the individual with the Absolute. The Commissar may live his life in the conviction that this umbilical cord is a "luxury-organ", but sooner or later he faces a crisis, at which point he realises it is not a luxury. For Koestler, such a point clearly came in the prison in Seville and the "hours by the window". For Rubashov, it

was the sudden appearance of the Grammatical Fiction, the language and logic of which the Party could not admit to. For Peter, it was the post-analysis decision to disembark and choose danger, and, in the unfinished sequel, the confrontation with the grotesque David.

For each of these events, the connection that Commissar-ethics successfully makes between man and society is not enough. There is a fundamental connection between man and the universe that has been deliberately severed and which now demands to be re-established. Koestler rather dramatically calls this the "revenge of the amputated organ".

"At this point one of two things might happen. Either the cut connection is re-established, and as an act of atonement the Man-Society connection broken off; this is the classical case of the Revolutionary turning into a Mystic, the total jump from Commissar to Yogi. Or the connection is not re-established - then the dead cord coils up and strangles its owner. This is the equally classical case of the ex-revolutionaries whose souls died of suffocation." (Koestler 1945a: 15-16)

This can be read as a psychological interpretation of Rubashov's Theory of Confessions. Rubashov - and his real-life counterparts in the Show Trials - typifies those "ex-revolutionaries whose souls died of suffocation" when they fail, in spite of their discovery of the Third Order or the Grammatical Fiction, to re-establish their connection with the "oceanic feeling". The psychological import is further emphasised in the essay by Koestler's observation that Jung, in his interpretation of the subconscious, comes close to describing the "umbilical cord" (in his theory, one presumes, of the collective unconscious).

But the umbilical cord, by implication in Koestler's theory, can have positive effects too. Thus, Peter's apparent guilt has a positive contribution to play in the establishment of a proper ethical perspective because it is the means by which "the cut connection is re-established". One can further deduce from the unpublished sequel to Peter's heroic endeavours that the connection nevertheless remains a tenuous one that is all too easily broken, once again isolating the individual in an ethical world devoid of a higher perspective - the telling "Grace had been withdrawn, death re-gained its sting. He was condemned to hope again" section of the unfinished *Arrival and Departure II*.

Koestler's three-world system

The Yogi... thus sheds fresh and important light on the reality of the Third Order. For in Koestler's three-world system (perception, conception and the numinous/"occult") the Third Order exists quite independently of the observer, who may go through life ignorant of its reality until a crisis looms, during which time the umbilical cord that connects the individual to this higher order becomes of crucial importance.

The Commissar, therefore, may choose to deny that such a higher reality exists; but that merely prevents him from formulating a proper view of the world. In other words, and in the language of *The Yogi...*, the man-society connection of the Commissar is not enough. *Any ethical system that claims to be complete must take into account the reality of the Third Order.*

Does that imply that Yogi-ethics is where Koestler was heading? The idea is not a new one; Beloff postulated whether Koestler "might not be some kind of crypto-transcendentalist" (Beloff 1975: 82), offering as evidence the experience of Seville. The same experience, with its reiteration of Euclid's proof that the number of primes is infinite scrawled on the prison wall, is also used by Renée Haynes to convince the reader that Koestler was a mystic in disguise (Haynes 1975: 175-186) - long before his interest in parapsychology blossomed into an almost full-time occupation. "In Spain, above all Koestler discovered mysticism" notes Carlet (MS 2435/4: 159), who then goes on to suggest that this had a decisive influence in Koestler's works.

Beloff's thesis is given added validity by the text of Koestler's suicide note of June 1982 which reinforces Beloff's argument that Koestler never repudiated the doctrine of the Third Order. In Rubashovian terms, Koestler wrote in June 1982

"I wish my friends to know that I am leaving their company in a peaceful frame of mind, with *some timid hopes for a de-personalised after-life beyond due confines of space, time and matter and beyond the limits of our comprehension.* This 'oceanic feeling' has often sustained me at difficult moments, and does so now, while I am writing this." (my italics) (MS 2308)

Such a hope, albeit "timid", again highlights a difference between Koestler and Orwell, who during his final illness had referred to his

impending death in terms of *extinction*, confirming the "death is final" statement he had earlier made in reviewing *Arrival and Departure*. More tragically, one can perceive a contrast between Arthur Koestler's belief in a higher reality and the desolation that Cynthia Koestler felt at her imminent death, reflected in the typed postscript to the suicide note added at the time of their suicide (Plate 2).

There is some circumstantial evidence in support of a Yogi-ethic interpretation of 1940s Koestler. "Believe it or not", Mamaine wrote to her twin sister in May 1947, "K has now only one interest: mysticism" (Goodman (ed) 1985: 51). There is Cynthia's revelation that during the time of Pope John, Koestler was attracted to Roman Catholicism. One could also cite the now famous bitter dispute with the late Iain Hamilton, and in particular the preface rewritten at Koestler's insistence²⁸ after Hamilton had attempted to put forward a Yogi-ethic view of his subject.

"My reading of Koestler's works has convinced me that he is *au fond* a deeply religious man. He has never admitted this, confessing only to several experiences of the quasi-mystical Freudian 'oceanic' feeling." (MS 2370/3)

Finally, there are the numerous interpretations, some of which are listed in the first part of this chapter, which use Yogi-ethical terms to describe Commissar-ethical behaviour of Rubashov and, for good measure, Gletkin: "atonement", "excommunication", "faith" and "grace" occur frequently in analyses of Koestler's work of this period.

This suggests that Koestler was engaged in a spiritual struggle, that lurking beneath the surface of the Commissar there is a Yogi longing to make himself heard, possibly the voice of Koestler himself who wished he "could still write an honest infra-red novel without an ultra-violet ending"! (Koestler 1945a: 13). Sidney Pearson, an American biographer of Koestler (Pearson 1978), goes as far as to suggest that indeed *all* Koestler's writings have a religious undertone.

One has to point out, however, that interest in mysticism or

²⁸The precise grounds for Koestler's annoyance are unclear; interestingly, however, Koestler's blue crayon cross is alongside the phrase "he has never admitted this" - suggesting that, perhaps with the interview with fellow ex-prisoner Anthony Grey in mind (Koestler 1974) he had not denied his religious inclinations.

Koestler's belief in miracles, also mentioned in Mamaine's letters, do not allow us to conclude that Koestler was a religious thinker. Interest in mysticism can, after all, remain the detached interest of the journalist or scientist. Belief in miracles can be assimilated in an atheistic *Weltanschauung*. Indeed, given that Koestler's background was that of a journalist and a scientist, it might be surprising had he not been keen to pursue a 'Yogi' approach to his experience in Seville and the writing that flowed out of it.

Perhaps such uncertainty reflects upon Koestler's inherent scepticism or the triumph of a novelist who was skilled at hiding his true beliefs beneath the characterisations of his novels. Perhaps also it is a tribute to the ease with which we assimilate Koestler's concept of the ethical spectrum into our thinking that we see the writer himself moving so adeptly towards one end of the spectrum or the other.

For my part, I am inclined to agree with Sidney Pearson up to a point, and conclude that for a period in the 1940s, Koestler, like many others who had emerged from the "pink decade", was heading towards the pararational world of Yogi-ethics. He had already suggested to a close friend that many of the best writers - he cited Huxley, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy - had started as revolutionaries and ended as mystics (MS 2372/1: 75).

Writing *The Yogi...* had however alerted Koestler to the fact, as explained above, that Yogi-ethics did not solve the problems that the Commissars had tried by more forcible means to overcome. It is significant that in his notes to the sequel of *Arrival...*, written after this essay, the character of a Yogi was to be introduced in less than complimentary terms. Note, too, that Robert Hoffman's adapted screenplay of *Arrival and Departure*, in its second draft form (which had been submitted to Koestler previously for approval and which contains Koestler's comments in blue crayon throughout) has all references to Peter "becoming a mystic" omitted, and the paranormal scene in which an apparition of Sonia communicates with Peter is rewritten as a meeting with the real Sonia in a cafe (MS 2317/5).

It is probable therefore that Koestler was striving to find a way out of the Yogi-Commissar dilemma and the repetitive swing of the pendulum

that is the subject of the final part of the essay. The Yogi and the Commissar were, to Koestler, predominantly the good and the evil of Nietzsche. Like Nietzsche, Koestler sought now to define an ethical system beyond good and evil that took into account the almost superhuman qualities of those at the Yogi-end who were in tune to the higher order of reality without abrogating the wider responsibility towards society that was often the concern of the Commissar.

1. vi. TOWARDS A SPIRITUAL ETHIC

The influence of Richard Hillary

If it is virtually certain that Koestler would be familiar with Nietzsche's writings from his student days in Vienna, one can be equally sure that Private Koestler 13805661 would not wish to identify his work with a philosopher often held to be Hitler's inspiration²⁹.

A more profitable approach, yet one apparently no Koestlerian scholar has pursued, is to look at the influence of an English-speaking writer, literally straight out of Oxford and the R.A.F.

"If the RAF represented Britain [in 1940-41]...and if the fighter pilots were its epitome, there was a short time when the most emblematic of them all was Richard Hillary." (Faulks 1996a: 113)

Faulks' recent biographical study of Hillary attempts to analyse the reasons for the young Battle of Britain pilot's continuing appeal half a century after his death by making reference to what Koestler called "the specific weight" of Hillary's story.

Rache Lovat Dickson introduced Richard Hillary and his lover Mary Booker to Koestler at a literary gathering in London on 31 May 1942.

"Richard much admired Koestler, and after he left London they

²⁹Whether it is fair judgment on Nietzsche is a moot point; nevertheless, at the time Nietzsche's ideas were "a spiritual source of contemporary conflict", to quote Copleston, whose study of the German philosopher was only published in 1942 on the British censors' understanding that it unambiguously condemned Nietzsche. Koestler would be all too aware of the climate of opinion even if he did take up some of Nietzsche's ideas. See Copleston 1975: vi-viii.

continued to correspond. Mary took to him less: too much intellect, too little heart." (Burn 1988: 92)

Certainly at the time Hillary made a great impression on Koestler. The two can often be seen quoting one another in letters to friends, and at one point, it has been suggested, they planned to share a flat with Koestler's ex-lover, Daphne Hardy - "Koestler plus Hillary I thought to myself, too strong in one house" commented Hillary's lover later (MS 2418/1)³⁰. Hillary, as stated already, appears under another name in *Arrival and Departure*; and the pilot's death (on 8 January 1943, during a night training flight at the age of 23) devastated Koestler. He was instrumental in setting up a Trust Fund, with the help of Hillary's parents, in Richard Hillary's honour to encourage young writers and was also entrusted with much of his unpublished material.

But quite apart from the biographical perspective - and in passing, it is astonishing to note that Hamilton's biography makes no mention of Hillary - there are sound reasons for arguing that Hillary provided ethical material for Koestler.

One need look no further than *The Yogi and the Commissar* collection of essays for *prima facie* evidence of Hillary's ethical contribution to Koestler's development - for notwithstanding the final section (written specifically for the publication of *The Yogi and the Commissar* and dealing with the vast subject of the Soviet "experiment"), Koestler's valedictory essay on Hillary is the longest piece in the book: longer even than the eponymous essay discussed above and its sequel.

Secondly, if one takes into account the fact that Koestler was writing the Hillary essay at the same time as writing *Arrival...* (MS 2372/4: 9), it is equally important to realise that many people read the Hillary essay in the *Horizon* issue of April 1943 at the same time as *Arrival...*. A cursory glance at the volumes of correspondence received by Koestler from 1942 to 1943 reveals that Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics left most people cold; but the exploits of a young Battle of Britain pilot, and Koestler's tribute to such an unusually

³⁰When this assertion of Mary Booker was put recently (August 1997) to Denise Patterson (to whom *The Last Enemy* was dedicated), she was apparently highly amused at the thought, indicating perhaps Booker's comment was not to be taken seriously (Sainsbury, pers. comm.).

gifted pilot, were predictably a different matter altogether³¹.

Hillary's ethical dialogue

Hillary's *The Last Enemy* (Hillary 1942) still offers the reader one of the most perceptive accounts of what it meant to be one of "the few" in 1940. Indeed, as Faulks observes, Hillary's only published work rapidly acquired

"the peculiar aura of a book that says something vital, whose importance goes beyond what it literally describes." (Faulks 1996a: 168)

What it "literally describes" is the emergence of Hillary and others of his generation - the self-styled "long-haired boys" - from the university air squadrons to the training squadrons of the R.A.F. and then to Fighter Command and their matter-of-fact deeds in the Battle of Britain. Much of the book is descriptive, but its significance to the ethicist lies in its description of the beliefs held by Hillary and his close friend and fellow pilot in 603 Squadron, Peter Pease.

Hillary's cold, calculating approach to the war (before his disfigurement and his encounter with the dying young woman in the Blitz) suggested to Commander Peters, writing to Koestler in May 1943, that Hillary "had advanced far along the road to renunciation" (MS 2372/2: 104) by the time of his premature death. This sounds remarkably similar to Koestler's description of Spartacus attempting to deviate neither left nor right. Hillary, like Spartacus before him, had sought to blot out any thoughts of compassion or warmth towards his fellow pilots, but ultimately - like Spartacus - failed to obey the Law of Detours.

Certainly, anyone who had read *Darkness...* two years previously would be struck by the parallels between Koestler's novel and the pivotal chapter of Hillary's book, "The World of Peter Pease". Faulks maintains that this chapter "indulges the less interesting aspect of Hillary's

³¹Captain Tony Sainsbury, who became the first Trustee of the Hillary Archive, acknowledges that this is the case (Sainsbury, pers. comm.). "I was 17-18 and reasonably widely read, but though I knew of *The Yogi...* they (*sic*) did leave me cold."

writing" (Faulks 1996a: 169). But the chapter is only "less interesting" to those who see the book as a factual account of what it was like to fly a Spitfire in the Battle of Britain - just as the First and Second Hearing passages in *Darkness at Noon* will disappoint those who look to Koestler for a factual account of what it was like to be a revolutionary in Stalinist Russia. In Koestler's work, however, the dialogue is convincing. Hillary's "long recreated conversations" with Pease are, in contrast, contrived as Faulks suggests (Faulks 1996a: 169). But they serve precisely the same purpose as the Hearings in *Darkness...* and remind us that Hillary's intention behind writing the book was less autobiographical and more ethical, as he sought to express his own gradual conversion to an ethic of self-sacrifice.

Thus, Hillary, consciously or otherwise, borrows the Koestlerian technique of ethical dialogue to stress the difference between his own value-system and that of Pease, the quintessentially Anglican war hero. Hillary contrasts his own selfishness with Pease's idealism and faith. The lengthy dialogue is reminiscent of the First Hearing in *Darkness...*, even down to the development of the argument in which Hillary, like Rubashov, attempts to take the offensive but is put on the defensive by the other's conviction. The "rightness" of the Party is strikingly similar to the moral certainty of Pease's Christianity. Pease points out that Hillary is no medieval mystic, just as Gletkin had pointed out that Rubashov was no saint. Hillary concludes with the accusation that in Pease's world, he would be a cog in the Party machine; Pease's sole concern was society, Hillary's the individual.

Hillary and Rubashov

Like Rubashov and Gletkin, Hillary and Pease represent opposite ends of the ethical spectrum. Intentionally or not, Hillary's account is a contemporary demonstration of Koestler's ethical spectrum in action.

Hence the immature Hillary admits that even after the flying accident that left him scarred and requiring drastic plastic surgery to rebuild his face and hands that

"I could congratulate myself that I was self-centred enough to have survived any attack on my position as an egocentric."

(Hillary 1942: 203)

The climax of the book occurs when the "egocentric" Hillary helps to dig out a woman with her (dead) baby from a bombed building. The woman's comment to Peter "I see they got you too" caused a crisis of faith in Hillary's cynicism, just as the execution of Bogrov had "unbalanced the logical equation" (Koestler 1940: 134) for Rubashov.

"That that woman should so die was an enormity so great that it was terrifying in its implications, in its lifting of the veil on possibilities of thought so far beyond the grasp of the human mind." (Hillary 1942: 215)

The ghostly awareness of Peter Pease that had been to Hillary his personal Grammatical Fiction reasserted itself as Hillary attempted to evaluate his own ethics in the light of the woman's suffering. Pease, he reflected, had instantly recognised Nazism as an embodiment of evil rather than the machinations of a criminal power. Hillary, who had reacted to the woman's words by silently cursing her, was overwhelmed by guilt, just as Rubashov had been³².

"And it was in the end, at bottom, myself against which I raged, myself I had cursed. With awful clarity I saw myself suddenly as I was." (Hillary 1942: 216)

"With awful clarity I saw myself suddenly as I was": *words which might just as easily have been spoken by Rubashov after his "dialogues" with the Grammatical Fiction had led him to see, for the first time, the manner in which he had betrayed Arlova, Richard and little Loewy for his own selfish ends.*

Thus, Hillary's contemporary experience demonstrates the validity of Koestler's Grammatical Fiction in situations far removed from the original Stalinist context. In other words, Hillary has shown the ethical significance of guilt postulated by Koestler in the three novels, but in a contemporary wartime setting.

The parallel continues throughout the last chapter of *The Last Enemy*. If we take as the equivalent of Rubashov's confession the self-inflicted curse Hillary had made, then the similar awareness of guilt

³²The encounter with the dying woman was apparently a fabrication on Hillary's part, intended to highlight the author's bankrupt ethical system of the past; the crisis of faith and subsequent conversion of Hillary may have been much more gradual: but see Faulks 1996a: 161.

now made Hillary also look for a means of atoning his "sin". Confession was not an option available to him as it had been to Rubashov. Yet the motive of atonement and the need for confession are implicit in the final sentence of the book:

"If I could...tell a little of the lives of these men [Peter Pease and his flying companions], I would have justified, at least in some measure, my right to fellowship with my dead, and to the friendship of those with courage and steadfastness who were still living and who would go on fighting until the ideals for which their comrades had died were stamped for ever on the future of civilisation." (Hillary 1942: 221)

Hillary therefore is seen at the end of the book as embracing, with the help of his own Grammatical Fiction - the unseen presence of Peter Pease, whose death he had experienced in a premonition whilst under anaesthetic (Hillary 1942: 141³³) - precisely the kind of non-rational ethic that he had previously denounced. His journey therefore was almost identical to that of Rubashov, the only difference being that for the moment, at least, Hillary was spared the ultimate sacrifice of death. It is little wonder, therefore, that as Carlet observed (MS 2435/4: 156), Koestler was fond of quoting Hillary's maxim "the survivor is always the debtor". The significance of guilt in radically changing one's ethical position on the spectrum had been established, in Koestler's mind, beyond doubt. It was Koestler who was the debtor.

Hillary and Peter Slavek

There is also a close link between Hillary and Peter Slavek that again vindicates Koestler's growing dissatisfaction with revolutionary ethics and points towards the re-instatement of the individual ethic. The key event, which spawned the lengthy essay *In Memory of Richard*

³³Unlike Hillary's description of the dying woman at the end of the book, this is no piece of literary licence. In July 1942, The Society for Psychical Research sought to verify the experience and to obtain corroborative evidence (HA II/3/109). Hillary replied in terms that are indeed less confident than was the case in *The Last Enemy* ("...for the moment I can give you neither the time nor the date of this experience...") but remains emphatic that the account was a truthful recollection of an actual event.

Hillary in Horizon, was Hillary's tragic death³⁴.

However, it is not possible to say how much of an influence upon *Arrival and Departure* Hillary's death was: for whilst we now know that Hillary died three months before the completion of *Arrival*...³⁵, we still cannot say whether the manner of his death influenced the novel's ending. It is certainly possible that Peter's "departure" on such irrational grounds was influenced, if not determined, by news of Koestler's young friend.

But if that must remain a matter of conjecture, it is apparent that Hillary's return to flying was as illogical in Koestler's mind as Peter Slavek's "departure" and return to danger at the end of *Arrival*.... Furthermore, the two events were connected in the minds of some readers. Hilde Spiel asked Koestler whether Hillary would have insisted on joining the "fraternity of the dead" if he had met his own Sonia (MS 2372/3: 49); and E. M. Forster wrote shortly after the publication of *Arrival*... "that you, rather than Hillary, were fumbling after this very important mystery of the intersection of the tragic and the trivial" (MS 2345/1: 56).

The crucial point to note is that Hillary appeared to accept that, in his own terminology, his days were numbered, and there is an inevitability in the fatal crash.

"He knew he was going to die, and he wanted to find out why. In fact he had deliberately chosen a course of which he knew that it could not end otherwise but by his death." (Koestler 1945a: 47)

In support of this theory are Hillary's letters, many of which are addressed to his lover, X [Mary Booker], and used by Koestler (against

³⁴The background to the fatal crash has been the subject of some controversy over the years. Pilot error remains the most feasible theory, as suggested by the two accident report summaries (HA II/4/4 5:3 and 5:4) with the supporting evidence of a similar, but in this case, not fatal, error by a maimed Spitfire pilot (Burn 1988: 236-237).

³⁵Hillary died on 8 January 1943; we can now confidently date the completion of *Arrival and Departure* to 20 May.

Hillary's family's wishes³⁶) to support the ethical viewpoint that he had articulated through the fictional experience of Peter Slavek.

"'You ask me to have faith, darling. Yes, but faith in what?...But if you mean faith that I shall survive, why then again No. If this thing plays to its logical conclusion there is no reason why I should survive.'" (Quoted in Koestler 1945a: 47-48)

Again, but for the context one might deduce this was Koestler's Peter Slavek writing to Odette, rather than Hillary to his real-life lover. For Hillary, like Peter Slavek, follows his instinct against all reason.

Furthermore, there is a very marked resemblance between Hillary's desire to fly again and Peter's desire to fight. Sonia sees this as a death-wish: but as Peter's second crusade takes shape from the after-shock of Sonia's psychoanalysis (a medical parallel to Hillary's enforced slow recuperation), Peter wishes to embrace "the fraternity of the dead" (Koestler 1943: 133) - which is as near to Hillary's "fellowship with my dead" as you could get using different words!

Just as Sonia tried (but ultimately failed) to rationalise Peter's heroism, Hillary attempted to do likewise and similarly failed.

"One can rationalise for ever and one's reason finally tells one that it is madness, but it is one's instinct to which one listens..." (Quoted in Koestler 1945a: 48)

Koestler follows Sonia Bolgar's lead in suggesting vanity, fanatical devotion and an urge towards self-destruction as psychological explanations of Hillary's guilt and consequent heroism. He is forced to admit defeat because, according to Faulks, even Koestler could not quite believe in the strength of Hillary's conversion, expressed in the final paragraph of *The Last Enemy* (Faulks 1996a: 202).

"We are, of course, fond of our little adjectives; they save us from pathos and embarrassment, from the threat of having to face the tragic implication. We prefer to let our lights shine like candles under the stars. But once they have burned down we are back where we started, under a sky too large for us. Our adjectives fade...only the subject remains, alone under the stars, faced with that nameless force which is set to destroy

³⁶See Burn 1988: 228-229. It is quite clear that Koestler did not have permission to quote directly from the Hillary-Booker letters in the *Horizon* article, a major factor in the early demise of the Hillary Memorial Volume.

him." (Koestler 1945a: 54)

From Koestler thinking of Hillary to Koestler writing of Peter a few months later (in the unpublished sequel):

"He was cut off from the subterranean communion with a force that he could not name, and left shivering and alone; the stars had suddenly become paler, the immense night had shrunk and closed in around him like walls." (MS 2317/2: 3)

From Peter Slavek "left shivering and alone" to Hillary reflecting on his need for "fellowship with my dead":

"Perhaps it is the fear of being so much alone...the total lack of human contact [at the RAF training base] is awful..." (Quoted in Koestler 1945a: 56)

My argument is that Hillary and Peter Slavek are almost interchangeable personalities, facing similar ethical problems.

The problem of the non-rational ethic

Hillary's death, and its awful probability, confirmed to Koestler that he had been right in making Peter behave as illogically as he did. But of course irrational behaviour is subject to a number of interpretations³⁷. There will always be those who will follow Peter Kramer's unpublished analysis of *Arrival and Departure* (MS 2373/2: 116-119) and claim that it is Koestler's critique of Sonia's psychoanalysis rather than Sonia herself that is flawed. Hillary's oft-quoted "I can rationalise no further. I must let instinct decide" (quoted in Koestler 1945a: 54) is proof that the ethic of Hillary or Peter Slavek cannot be read purely as neurosis as Kramer implied. But it is not necessarily proof that the ethic was *illogical*.

One only has to read Michael Burn's account of Hillary's return to flying to see a persuasive argument for the *logic* of Hillary's death:

³⁷With regard to Hillary's death, Phyllis Bottome, in an unpublished paper "Richard Hillary of the R.A.F.", refers to "the logic of his last wordless act". In suggesting Hillary returned to the Air Force simply because he knew every man capable of flying was still needed, she also points out his death was perhaps partly "to defy and punish those who had outraged his sense of human decency." (HA II/4/6/A/32: 8). Bottome's view deserves consideration as she was "nearly Hillary's biographer" (Sainsbury, *pers. comm.*); it also demonstrates one can never exclude the possibility of a logical explanation for apparently illogical acts.

the fear of failure, disgust at the futility of his London life, the sense of unfinished business and writer's block all contributed to Hillary's return to active service. A contemporary, who discussed the matter of Hillary's death with Koestler shortly afterwards, has suggested

"...his return to flying was seen as admirable if not heroic (though the latter word was one that we used sparingly if at all). Certainly I did not consider it 'irrational', though I would not use the word 'logical'. We took it for granted that after recovering from wounds one went back to duty unless one had been medically downgraded." (Sir Michael Howard, *pers. comm.*)

Once back in control of a fighter plane, there is a sad and terrible logic to the plane spinning out of control if one has hands like Hillary (Burn 1988: 238-240).

The "admirable if not heroic" action of such characters, in real life or fiction, may have been motivated simply by guilt. But such actions as Hillary insisting *à la* Douglas Bader to fly again after horrific injury, and Slavek's jumping ship at the last moment, surely deserve to be judged on their own merits rather than psychoanalysed. At any rate, any explanation that the Sonias entertain does not detract from the wholly non-rational bravery of such men. One can therefore conclude that Faulks' lengthy analysis of the reasons for Hillary's death is largely irrelevant: Hillary simply did what he did.

Faulks' review of the various interpretations of Hillary's death mirrors the difficulty that Koestler encountered in making his fictitious heroes conclude by engaging in equally illogical acts - Rubashov's confession, Peter's jumping ship and so on. Faulks' thesis, placing Hillary's work into the mainstream of 1930s English literature devoted "to the dilemma of what action a person should take in troubled times" (Faulks 1996a: 198) does not however acknowledge the difference between Hillary and Koestler, and other writers such as Orwell who had also struggled to don the "man of action" epithet post-Wilfred Owen.

The difference, in my opinion, is that the pararational ethic demonstrated in real life by Bukharin's confession (even without the assistance of a Grammatical Fiction), Koestler's "hours by the window" and Hillary's search for the "fraternity with my dead" can only be explained by accepting that a fundamental change had taken place by

which their previous accomplishments and values counted for nothing. 'Finishing the job' may seem to account for Bukharin's confession, as Middleton Murry assumed it also did in what he alleged was Hillary's suicide (Faulks 1996a: 202-203). But what was at stake was so much more than their individual lives that in championing this thesis, Faulks' explanation remains unsatisfactory. After all, Hillary's return to flying was to cause the death of his navigator, Wilfrid Fison³⁸. (And what of those who would be implicated and arrested by Bukharin's "confession"?)

Unfortunately, the fundamental change to the pararational ethic is as understated in *The Last Enemy* as it is in Koestler's ethical novels and particularly *Arrival and Departure*.

The literary clue to Hillary's acceptance of a higher ethic comes, as Faulks realises, in the use of the phrase "my dead" at the end of *The Last Enemy* (Hillary 1942: 221). But whereas Faulks, in his 'finishing the job' theory of Hillary's death, focuses upon the word "my", with its hints of comradeship and possession of a shared goal, the emphasis should properly be upon the word "dead": the direct sense of communion with his dead comrades that Hillary felt. Such a sense of other-worldly fellowship implies the existence of the Third Order that Koestler had discovered in Seville and is redolent of Rubashov's synaesthetic fellowship with Arlova, or Peter Slavek's identification with his dead brother³⁹.

Something more powerful than mere "intellectual change", which is the only transformation that Faulks concedes, is at work in Hillary. Phyllis Bottome expressed this by stating that Hillary "stood on the

³⁸Curiously, Koestler does not seem to be aware of Fison's death (Burn 1988: 231). Otherwise, he might have been more circumspect before using the phrase of Hillary being "drawn, like a moth to the flame" in the *Horizon* article: a phrase that Burn states gave rise to the "suicide" theory, which if accepted, is actually a murder theory.

³⁹Hillary's perception of a spiritual reality whilst airborne was certainly shared by some Spitfire pilots during the war and is memorably summed up in a poem of the Canadian fighter pilot John Gillespie Magee, "High Flight". "And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod/The high, untrespassed sanctity of space,/ Put out my hand and touched the face of God".

brink of another world" (HA II/4/6/A/32:6); in the context of her essay it is unclear whether this refers to his new life in England after his American visit or a reference to his impending death. Such ambiguity is in itself a reflection of Hillary's love of life combined with his acceptance of the probability of his death.

What Koestler chose to focus upon was Hillary's initial rejection of, and later 'fraternity' with, Pease's spiritual ethic. Koestler's own theory at the time - that Hillary's was an "exemplary death" - is curiously accepted by Faulks elsewhere (Faulks 1996b: 305). Burn's final analysis of Koestler's writings is essentially damning: namely, that Koestler used Hillary as a guinea-pig to support his theories of an irrational ethic (Burn 1988: 229). My own view is that it did indeed suit Koestler not to know that Fison was on board at the time of the fatal accident, or to research (as he could have done later) the Board of Enquiry reports which refer unambiguously to pilot error.

Hillary, through his writings and his death, was therefore deliberately used to lend support to Koestler's argument for the rejection of revolutionary ethics. The various theories that were, and still are, generated to account for Hillary's action are not as important, indeed, as the debate itself. The old question "Why did Bukharin confess?" had now found a home on Koestler's adopted shores: "Why did Hillary return to flying?" Orwell's "loss of rationality" argument is no longer applicable simply to a work of fiction. Furthermore, in addition to assisting him explore the nature of the individual (Yogi) ethic through the characterisation of Peter, Hillary had also shown the manner in which individuals might move from one end of the ethical spectrum to the other.

But Hillary had one final contribution to make, in a letter to his lover only weeks before his death, in which he referred to the two planes of existence, the *vie tragique* and *vie triviale* that make up human existence (Koestler 1945a: 60). Hillary proposed that we cannot live permanently on the one plane or the other but must oscillate between the two. Koestler himself observed that Hillary too oscillated between his twenty-three years and eternity, acceptance and revolt. This of course is Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics under a different

guise. Hillary now pointed the way forward to Koestler by suggesting instances where the two planes might meet (such as his own experiences of physical danger); Koestler began to think less in terms of extremes - had not Hillary echoed Koestler's abhorrence of mysticism *per se*? (Hillary 1942: 163) - and more in terms of an intersection, or synthesis, of the diametrically opposed ethical standpoints. In this way, Hillary can be seen as instrumental in establishing the ethical framework, independently of Koestler's novels, for the construction of the holon in *Insight and Outlook*. This ethical framework will be the subject of discussion in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Revolutionary ethics had ultimately proved barren, except that from the guilt-ridden world of Nicolas Rubashov and Peter Slavek had arisen the "unnamed force", the Grammatical Fiction, that made a nonsense of any logical or rational ethical system. The individual ethic and the need to change society had to be reconciled, but as yet there was no structure for such an ethic. This at least is Koestler's epitaph for Hillary and the last of the long-haired boys he represented.

"It is the myth of the crusade without a cross, and of desperate crusaders in search of a cross. What creed they will adopt, Christ's or Barrabas', remains to be seen." (Koestler 1945a: 67)

Peter Slavek's departure (so far as the published novels are concerned) is Koestler's final word on the futility of following the Yogi-ethic or the Commissar-ethic. The real world in which difficult decisions of conscience have to be made (and which Koestler attempted to describe in the sequel, through the complex ethical dilemma of David's suffering and the saving of Rachel) required something deeper than the revolutionary ethics he had previously encountered.

Ironically, in *Arrival and Departure* as Peter is led away to the airplane that heralds his second crusade, he is led away by a young pilot "about Peter's age". The spring in his step, the undone buttons, the "certain jauntiness bordering on conceit" point to only one person: Richard Hillary. The undone buttons were a trademark of the Battle of Britain pilot; Hillary had said of himself "My walk as I enter the Mess

is jaunty" (Koestler 1945a: 48). Koestler's literary portrait of the young pilot matches the Eric Kennington oil painting of Hillary commissioned by his father (Hillary 1943: colour plate). Might it not be Hillary who personally escorts us away from revolutionary ethics to the post-war problems that were to occupy Koestler for the next few years?

"The door opened again. The young pilot's face was slightly more tense now, and his gait a trifle more jaunty than before.

'Well, here we go, young man,' he said cheerfully." (Koestler 1943: 187)

CHAPTER 2: HIERARCHICAL ETHICS

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine Koestler's departure from revolutionary ethics, which he had implicitly acknowledged with the first *Yogi...* essay would be inadequate to deal with the complex post-war world, and to trace his move towards his significant contribution to ethics, the theory of the holon.

The bridge between revolutionary ethics and the later concept of the holon was made in 1945, when Koestler first used the term 'hierarchy'. I hope to demonstrate that Koestler's scientific background enabled him to apply what he perceived as once solely a theological term to understand the modern world.

Replacing a horizontal 'spectrum' with a vertical 'hierarchy' allowed Koestler to explore the idea that human action could be understood by rules which operate only on a specific hierarchical level, and that unlike a horizontal spectrum, higher levels could be interpreted as being more successful or integrated than lower levels. For the first time in Koestler's writing, the concept of progress is introduced, related to movement up the hierarchical ladder. This theory makes the action of his ethical novels understandable within Koestler's scientific terminology and enables us to appreciate the lack of communication between the characters in the novels. I shall also examine Koestler's claim that the theory demonstrates the irreducibility of ethical absolutes.

I shall finally examine the 1946 League For the Freedom and Dignity of Man that was the combined effort of Orwell and Koestler. The project occupied so much of Koestler's energies in the immediate aftermath of the war that it deserves close examination to see if, and how, it relates to its author's ambitious claims made at the end of the second *Yogi...* essay for a synthesis between the two opposite ends of the ethical spectrum that Koestler had set down.

In addition to the archival material and Koestler's autobiographical accounts of the period, two other sources have proved to be a rich if

unlikely vein in examining Koestler's ethics of the post-war period: *Twilight Bar* (Koestler 1945b), published simultaneously as *The Yogi...* and *The Call-Girls* (Koestler 1971), Koestler's last novel. It is all too easy for Koestlerian scholars to dismiss *Twilight Bar*, for the perfectly good reason that Koestler himself was dissatisfied with the work: yet if one is prepared to overlook the clumsy stagecraft, particularly in Act Three, and the puppet-like nature of the characters (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 131-132 for Cynthia Koestler's recollection of the production of her husband's play), it provides some interesting clues to Koestler's developing ethical theory, and these will be discussed below.

The Call-Girls is equally neglected, but a careful reading of the novel sheds a great deal of light on the operation of Koestler's ethical system in an area inspired by his own life story. If Webberley suggests *The Yogi...* essays deserve a re-rating, then I will argue in this chapter that these two works are much more important in understanding Koestler's philosophy than hitherto supposed.

Koestler's ethical development

"A novel is not a philosophical treatise, and thus the intended message of Peter Slavek's story could only be hinted at in an implicit, oblique way. But I have endeavoured to clarify it in later works, the first of which was *The Yogi and the Commissar*." (Koestler A. & C. 1984: 31)

There can be no doubt that Jonathan Cape's suggestion of compiling an anthology of essays (see page 58 above) came at the right time; it is clear from the diaries that by 1944 Koestler felt exhausted as a novelist and, as has been noted, the idea of compiling a series of essays had already occurred to him.

More importantly, however, such a series of essays would emphasise the author's ethical development. Cape had observed that many of Koestler's magazine articles had illustrated themes from *Arrival and Departure*. An anthology was, in Cape's opinion, important "when some sort of clarity about the intellectual's position is essential. What a fog we live in!" (MS 2373/1: 203)

With Cape's backing, this was an ideal opportunity for Koestler to

elaborate upon the ideas aired in the ethical novels. Nor was there any difficulty in gathering the material. Koestler had the *Horizon* material to hand¹, and given that *Horizon* readers had voted *Birth of a Myth* as the most popular work in Connolly's magazine in 1943 (Shelden 1989: 83), it was perfectly natural to include such material in an anthology. Koestler had also been busy writing for various American magazines, the style of which he reasoned would be a counterpoint to the subtler *Horizon* essays. *The Yogi and the Commissar* might therefore be seen as almost incidental to the main preoccupation of Koestler in 1944, the Zionist cause.

Tyndall argues that Koestler's renewed interest in Zionism was due to two factors: the mistaken belief that his mother had died in Auschwitz and his wife's entrapment in France. Tyndall notes that Koestler played an important part in establishing the state of Israel, a crusade she traces to his *Ostjuden* background (Tyndall 1992: Introduction). In fact, as Scammell has pointed out (Scammell, pers. comm.), Koestler's mother's family was one of the most distinguished Western Jewish families in Austro-Hungary. Tyndall then suggests that when Koestler heard that his mother was alive and his wife was safe, he turned his attention to campaigning against Communism.

The final part of the anthology, which Koestler called *Explorations*, adds weight to Tyndall's thesis. For this contained the only material written specifically for the anthology's publication; and of the four new essays, three concerned themselves with what Koestler called "the Soviet experiment" - "Anatomy of a Myth", "Soviet Myth and Reality" and "The End of an Illusion". Certainly, these new pieces of work were the ones that caused most controversy upon publication, with Koestler branded an "anti-Sovieteer" and charged with "lies, half-truths and insinuations" (De Villiers 1945: 13-16). The same pro-Stalin sentiment that had blighted Orwell's plans for *Animal Farm* now brought a pamphlet by John Lewis and Reginald Bishop protesting against the publication of *The Yogi...* with its authors accusing Koestler of encouraging a "violent overthrow of the Soviet state" (MS 2370/5).

¹"The Yogi and the Commissar" (June 1942); "Birth of a Myth" (April 1943); "The Intelligentsia" (March 1944).

However, as I have sought to demonstrate in Chapter 1, Koestler's so-called "campaign", to use Tyndall's word, against Communism had never really ceased since he had left the Party in 1938. Further, Tyndall's preoccupation with Koestler's role in shaping immediate post-war history excludes any comment in her thesis upon the ethics of Koestler as they continued to take shape, from *Darkness...* and *Arrival...* to the post-war friendship with Orwell. It is difficult to agree wholeheartedly with Tyndall's argument that Koestler was partly responsible for Western anti-Soviet feelings during the Cold War when even the prospect of legal action (to which Koestler was never averse) would not draw him into a debate on anti-Soviet propaganda. He preferred not to answer De Villiers' damning article, when at least one academic, O. G. Backeburg of the University of Witwatersrand urged a reply (MS 2373/4; MS 2374/1); and he told his lawyers that he wished to pursue libel in the courts only if the court could be turned into an arena for a wider ethical discussion. To Koestler, Stalinism was still merely an example of the polarised ethic of the Yogi or Commissar that he had learned to distrust. The only conclusion to be safely drawn is that it was the *non-Soviet* essays and their ethical implications that were the important parts of *The Yogi and the Commissar*.

2.i. KOESTLER THE SCIENTIST

The role of science

The final essay in the 1945 anthology offers important clues both to Koestler's scientific past and to the synthesis of Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics that he hoped to achieve in a hierarchical approach to ethics. For like the Soviet essays, the piece had been written specifically for the 1945 publication deadline.

"I have fought myself over this issue for the last quarter of an hour and finally I have locked the gin and the vermouth in the cupboard and settled down to my desk, feeling very satisfied with myself." (Koestler 1945a: 227)

Indeed, it might appear from Koestler's cavalier approach to the

writing of the sequel to the 1942 *Horizon* essay that the world of science was alien to Koestler. The opening must not deceive the reader, however. Koestler had been very much engaged with the world of science from his student days in Vienna and now sought to look at the contrasting figures of the Yogi and the Commissar from a fresh, scientific angle.

He had undergone what seems like an almost Augustinian "*Tolle, lege*" experience as a 19-year old student first encountering Einstein's theory of Relativity.

"A phrase suddenly struck me and has remained in my memory ever since. It said that the theory of General Relativity led the human imagination 'across the peaks of glaciers never before explored by any human being'. This cliché had an unexpectedly strong effect. I saw Einstein's world-shaking formula - energy equals mass multiplied by the square of the velocity of light - hovering in a kind of rarefied haze over the glaciers, and this image carried a sensation of infinite tranquillity and peace." (Koestler 1952: 98)

Admittedly, in *Arrow in the Blue* Koestler was recalling the incident with the benefit of hindsight, but his clear fascination with the image of relativity, still fresh after the intervening years ("a kind of rarefied haze over the glaciers"), does illustrate Koestler's dual attraction to art and science.

As a student, he had then "tried to keep abreast with the revolutionary developments in theoretical physics" (Koestler 1952: 111). In addition to his knowledge of mathematics, theoretical physics and psychology, he also possessed at least a basic knowledge of biology long before his controversial support of Kammerer's Lamarckian theories², so that in 1947 (still during what is usually referred to as Koestler's "political period"!) Koestler was writing in his diary entry for 9 July, "Why is there no evidence for inherited characteristics?" (MS 2305).

²Koestler 1971. Briefly, Kammerer claimed to have bred the toad, *Alytes obstetricans*, underwater, the result of which fifth generation toads had inherited the acquired characteristic of spikes on their hands to assist them in the mating process. Such a claim, if proven, would be contrary to the laws of Darwinian evolution, but Kammerer shot himself in 1926, shortly after the discovery that some of the specimens had been faked - or, as Koestler supposes, tampered with by another hand.

It is clear he had also kept abreast of scientific developments after his student days were over. In 1929, as a journalist working for the influential Ullstein group, he had managed to obtain an interview with the Nobel Prize Winner for Physics, Louis de Broglie (awarded the Prize for his wave theory of matter). De Broglie was apparently more than pleased to be interviewed by a journalist who had a "scientific education"; they talked "for three or four hours" and the interview occupied a whole page in *Vossische Zeitung* (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 23). When Koestler returned to scientific writing in *The Yogi and the Commissar II*, he was very much on home ground.

Scientific language in Koestler's writing

Koestler's scientific background cannot therefore be underestimated. He had been aware in his years in the Communist Party of the way in which science could be manipulated for political ends: in Stalin's Russia, the People's Commissar for Public Education, Lunacharsky, had made a film documenting Kammerer's work entitled *Salamandra*, which was so popular Koestler had still been able to see it in Moscow six years after its release (Koestler 1971: 3); and of course, Pavlov's conditioning experiments had been the source of much propaganda by the pro-Lamarckian Communist Party seeking evidence that knowledge acquired by teaching the masses could be inherited. Koestler's evocation of scientific language in 1945 to seek a solution to the Yogi-Commissar dilemma is therefore his own way to out-Herod Herod and not the new departure it would seem. Indeed, the first hint of Koestler's later emphasis on science to define his ethical stance can be found in the Rubashov-Ivanov and Rubashov-Gletkin hearings of *Darkness...*, or possibly earlier, in Calder's view, with Koestler assuming the detached manner of the scientist recording his experiences in a French internment camp in *The Scum of the Earth* (Calder 1968: 75).

Thus, as Webberley and others have sought to point out, the distinction between the *political* Koestler and *scientific* Koestler is wholly arbitrary and, in the light of all that has been said above, a dangerous one to make. Scientific method was merely the means by which

the Yogi and the Commissar might be analysed.

The application of science in this way had, in fact, concerned Koestler from a much earlier date than is often supposed. It is generally assumed that the "scientific period" of Koestler begins with his "Cassandra has gone hoarse" statement of 1956 and the beginning of the Janus trilogy, *The Sleepwalkers*. Yet the more one examines the archival evidence, the further back one sees Koestler's application of science to ethics and philosophy.

Two years before he announced in the preface to *The Trail of the Dinosaur* his "change of vocation", the notes for the American radio programme, "This I Believe", hosted by Ed Morrow, reveal that he was already formulating the theory that man's evolution is flawed (but see Chapter 3 below). And in his 1941-1943 Diary Notebook, the germ of the holon can be seen in his notes for *Insight and Outlook*, eight years before they came to fruition (MS 2305). The latter diary is dismissed by Tyndall as being of little importance to the Koestler scholar as it "offered very limited insights...mostly jottings and notes for Koestler's first science book" (Tyndall 1992: 250). Yet the truth, I suggest, is surely the opposite: the more one is forced to push back the dates for Koestler's scientific study, the more one can accept the premise that the application of science was an integral part of the development of Koestler's social ethics: *there is no "scientific" period to Koestler's life.*

2.ii. THE YOGI AND THE COMMISSAR II

Destiny and freedom

Such is the background to an essay which takes Koestler significantly further away from revolutionary ethics and the political arena towards a more scientific analysis of the ethical spectrum he had developed in 1942.

In the previous essay on ethics, Koestler had begun by setting the problem in abstract terms - the spectrum of behaviour which he

postulated might be diffracted into component parts, the Yogi at the ultra-violet end and the Commissar at the infra-red. The second essay, in keeping with Koestler's recent pragmatism (having spent 1944 wrestling with Zionism), sets the ethical problem on a practical level. At the outset, Koestler makes plain his abhorrence of determinism.

"...the very concept of determinism implies a split between thinking and doing; it condemns man to live in a world where the rules of conduct are based on *As-Ifs* and the rules of logic on *Beauses*." (Koestler 1945a: 227)

The terms Yogi and Commissar are replaced by the dichotomy between destiny and freedom, which Koestler views as an eternal duality in man's mental structure. The idea of destiny responds to an instinctual need to find some organising principle, thus alleviating an innate feeling of insecurity or anxiety (which Carlet and Tyndall have made clear are prominent traits in Koestler's personality). Its outward form, by which the strange and threatening is reduced to the familiar, is found in religion.

Around 1600 AD the character of destiny changed, according to Koestler. Many phenomena became explicable purely by reason.

"Deity, whose human passions had gradually decreased with increasing wisdom, now became entirely de-personalised...The gods had been supermen, extrapolations on an ascending scale; atoms and electrons were subhuman, extrapolations on a descending scale. Destiny which had operated from above now operated from below." (Koestler 1945a: 228)

In other words, the Enlightenment retained the idea of an enforced order, but the seat of the organising principle had shifted.

Koestler sees a parallel development of the human mind. As the human mind evolves, more complete explanations are sought for the world and the divinity which operates it becomes more perfected. The paradox between destiny and freedom now moves on to a conscious level, the contradiction between divine omnipotence and human freedom expressing itself in religion and myth.

"Eve eats the fruit of knowledge of good and evil against the will of the Lord...Jacob fights the angel; the tower of Babel is built and destroyed. The two instincts are locked in dramatic battle and the older instinct always wins against the younger one... On a planet with a friendlier climate populated with a biologically less vulnerable race, mythology might take an opposite course: each battle would end with a Promethean victory

over the gods and the race would grow up free, self-confident, without priests, leaders and kings - an attractive subject for dreams on a rainy day." (Koestler 1945a: 230)

The "attractive subject for dreams" is indeed aired, precisely as that, in the work deliberately published to coincide with the anthology: *Twilight Bar*. (Alpha and Omega, the alien interlopers, certainly fit the "self-confident" description of "biologically less vulnerable" beings; nor is there any suggestion that their race has any need for "priests, leaders and kings.") Suffice to say at this point that Koestler obviously sees as little chance for a reconciliation between destiny and freedom as he did between the Yogi and the Commissar; note also the words "biologically less vulnerable race" indicating that in 1945, Koestler may already have been thinking of the possibility of the 'flawed evolution' thesis of later years.

The older instinct, destiny, thus accords man "at least the illusion of freedom". Christianity carries the solution one stage further, by offering humankind the reality of freedom but on a human plane; divinity determines the world on a superhuman plane. The dilemma is sharpened yet at the same time offers a solution by projecting the dichotomy from the human mind onto the natural world, with God operating on a different level than that of the humans.

The Christian hierarchy

Thus Koestler introduces his readers for the first time, in 1945, to the concept of a hierarchy.

"The universe itself has been divided into levels of human volition, and divine volition = destiny. The levels stand in a hierarchic order, i.e. the laws of divine logic are impenetrable to the human mind, whereas the latter is an open book to divinity." (Koestler 1945a: 231)

In more primitive religions, Koestler argued, the world was homogeneous, for it was only the increase in knowledge that had led to the gods becoming de-personalized. The Christian world, on the other hand, was discontinuous: separate laws operated on separate levels of the hierarchy. He concluded

"The logical contradiction between freedom and determinism has been solved by attributing different types of logic to different

planes in the hierarchy." (Koestler 1945a: 231)

The Christian hierarchy is summed up by three characteristics:

1. God is an explanation of everything, but this cannot be formulated on a lower (i.e. human or animal) level.
2. The laws of the higher level cannot be reduced to, nor predicted from, the lower level.
3. Phenomena of a lower level and their laws are implied in a higher level, but if such phenomena manifest themselves on a lower level - say, higher level phenomena on a human level in the hierarchy - they cannot be explained and therefore are interpreted as miraculous.

The final stage in the depersonalization of the divine occurred, in Koestler's view, in the seventeenth century - "God became a mathematician" (Koestler 1945a: 231); God, it was now argued, had created the world according to precise mathematical formulae. Kepler's laws of planetary motion, which had so impressed Koestler as a boy, are perceived as eliminating the need for a "subjective operator" in the heavens: "God dissolved into natural law; for a perfect law leaves no scope for the judge" (Koestler 1945a: 232).

Koestler's argument is that the world remained homogenous, but on a higher bend of the evolutionary spiral. Determinism from above had merely been replaced by determinism from below. Koestler was quick to point out the implications of scientific determinism. For the laws of chemistry and physics, and later those of Darwinism and Mendelian genetics, left as little scope for free choice as the old system of the subjective God.

"The only difference was that philosophical jargon did its best to obscure the conflict. By the beginning of this century, however, philosophers grew tired of their own jargon, arguments on 'free will' were regarded as bad form and left to the theologians." (Koestler 1945a: 232)

By transferring the concept of a Christian hierarchy to the scientific world, he hoped to demonstrate the primacy of the hierarchy in understanding the world. The hierarchy now encapsulates the conflict between higher and lower levels of reality, played out by human consciousness. The problem of how to reconcile these levels when making conscious ethical decisions is, I believe, at the heart of the revolutionary ethics of Rubashov and Peter Slavek. As Webberley

comments upon this section of *The Yogi and the Commissar II*,

"This passage [pp. 231-232] bears the same relationship to Koestler's work as Darwin's study of finches bears to the forty years he spent subsequently in checking, exemplifying and corroborating." (Webberley 1975: 11)

Ethical implications

Ethical systems, Koestler reasoned, are based on the implicit assumption of free choice of action. Primitive religious systems sought to placate the gods, their ethical systems developing so that human free will, such as it was, might pacify the destiny determined in the heavens: in Koestler's language, reconciling the determinant with the determined. Ritual was a bridge between freedom and destiny.

As the deity became more omnipotent (at least in terms of our human perception), ethics came to be dominated less by appeasement and more by submission and humility. Free will became less important than divine guidance. Such guidance, in Koestler's *Weltanschauung*, can only be achieved by sacrificing volition, summed up in Koestler's formula, "I will not to will" (Koestler 1945a: 233).

With the progression towards a mathematical model of the universe, ethics followed suit by adopting a quantitative language: the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Ethics therefore remained true to its aim, to reconcile man's freedom with his destiny, but its code shifted in keeping with the changing nature of the perceived deity.

"Before the change, man's condition was derived from a Fall; now from an evolutionary Rise achieved by permanent violence in the struggle for survival." (Koestler 1945a: 233)

Christianity had sought to make society conform to the divine order by "Change from Within"; the new method of achieving Utopia aimed at "Change from Without". Christian principles of submission, guidance and meekness were replaced by domination, calculation and ruthlessness respectively. "The saint is succeeded by the revolutionary; the Yogi by the Commissar" (Koestler 1945a: 234).

Koestler noted one final twist to the evolution of ethics. Explanation no longer reassured. He is not as lucid as he might be at this point, but we can infer that as the level of mental organization

and the growth of knowledge increased, explanations for the world became more and more convoluted and difficult for the layman to grasp. Also, such explanations no longer invoked the deity. Religious determinism had once satisfied the urge for knowledge and reassurance. Scientific determinism satisfied only the former. It no longer provided protection by a paternal power. Koestler concludes his historic review of ethics by suggesting that "the neglected branch" - the urge for reassurance - was about to take its revenge by reverting to primitive myth.

The crisis in scientific determinism

Koestler's personal knowledge and experience of the revolution that was still taking place in science was now put to good use as he demonstrated the shortcomings of scientific determinism to meet the demands of quantum physics and embryology. The uncertain subatomic world postulated by Schrödinger and Heisenberg meant that, on the microscopic level at least, the world could no longer be fully explained in terms of Newtonian laws. A complete explanation by quantitative measurements was as fallacious as the old deistic explanations of the mystics.

Koestler then draws an important parallel between the principles of scientific knowledge and the Christian hierarchy outlined above. For example, the atom can be understood by recourse to its own set of particular laws, yet those same laws cannot be invoked in, or even extrapolated from, the higher, i.e. macroscopic, level. Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle does not apply to the everyday world.

Science is now reverting to the hierarchy of levels of organization it once supplanted; not as a regression into religious thought - though Koestler fails to admit that there are quantum physicists who see their discoveries in overtly religious terms - but as an *analogy of method* to solve the paradox of freedom and determinism.

Koestler also pointed to recent findings in embryology which suggested to him that in biology, as in physics, the stratification of the world into hierarchic levels of organization was a necessary

expedient. Thus, the components of a cell display different properties *in vitro*, in the blastular stage and inside the mature organism. These specific properties cannot be predicted from a lower level; nor can they be analysed 'downwards' into their component parts. There then follows the first statement of what was to be refined into Koestler's most important contribution to social ethics, the holon.

"Thus the *specific* behaviour of wholes can only be properly studied and described in terms of the relations of wholes to each other, and the specific behaviour of parts only in their relations to other parts; isolation destroys the very character of 'part-ness'; and so down to parts of parts." (Koestler 1945a: 240)

In other words, Koestler states, freedom on one level may be destiny at a lower level; the only way to comprehend destiny is to comprehend that one is a small part of a greater entity. If that is what the mystics had once said, it does not mean a victory of mysticism over science, rather a recognition of the limitations of science within its own deterministic principles. In effect, Koestler was stating that deterministic science had to be put into the context of the new, post-Einstein, *probabilistic* science: a theme to which he returned almost constantly for the remainder of his life, in subjects as diverse as parapsychology (Koestler 1972; Hardy, Harvie and Koestler 1973) and the possibility of an after-life where Koestler adopts a non-materialist stance (Koestler 1976).

The hierarchy was the means of putting science and history into the larger context of a single system which attempted to explain the flaws of Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics and much else besides.

Although the system was to be refined and elaborated upon over the next twenty years, it stands or falls on the notion of the hierarchy.

Exploration and contemplation

The final part of this crucial essay deals with the different perceptions one may have of the hierarchy of levels. Koestler compares the hierarchy to a staircase in which the horizontal surfaces represent the plane in which the laws of a given level operate and the vertical steps the quantum jumps which lead to the next level in the hierarchy.

The Scientific observer ("S") has a 'bird's-eye' view of the staircase, so that the levels of the staircase appear to be on the same plane: a spectrum in which the jumps are merely tiny dividing lines with no depth or substance. The mystic or contemplative ("C") views the staircase from an entirely different angle - head-on, as it were. The surfaces of the steps cannot be seen from his angle, only the jumps that separate the levels. To C, "everything becomes unexplained mystery" (Koestler 1945a: 244).

Both ways of looking at the staircase are equally valid; religion, Koestler observes, has indeed taught us these two ways of knowing - the exploration of the horizontal, wordly planes and the contemplation of the vertical order.

"The staircase of religion has only a few steep steps between inanimate matter and divinity, roughly corresponding to the six days of creation. The staircase of science has a great number of more delicate steps. The difference in height between the levels is often hardly visible, and more and finer sub-divisions are likely to emerge. But nature knows no continuity, only jumps, and a staircase never becomes a slope, even if the steps are made infinitely small...in a perpendicular light the whole staircase will always remain in shadow for him who contemplates it from the front." (Koestler 1945a: 246)

To avoid ethical confusion, according to Koestler, we must first establish in our minds the principle of levels of organisation.

Let us take the example of Sonia's analysis of Peter's heroism in *Arrival and Departure* - the heroism that so offended writers such as Orwell. To accuse the central character of a "loss of intelligence", as Orwell did, was to impose the laws of rationality and logic that operate on one plane to another plane altogether in which the behaviour of the central character had been acted out.

Peter had behaved according to a set of principles that took into account a *higher level in the hierarchy*: as had been the case with Rubashov. The vertical jump to the next level of the hierarchy had been made possible for Rubashov by the appearance of the Grammatical Fiction and the discovery of the "I" - which simply had not existed on the (lower) level inhabited by the Gletkins and Ivanovs. For Peter, it was his guilt - ironically, something that itself emerges from Sonia's probing of Peter - that suddenly allows Peter to take the quantum leap

to the level of the hierarchy at which self-sacrifice is, if not logical, certainly acceptable.

It is almost as if Peter behaves like the kind of sub-atomic particle that had become familiar to the quantum physicists whose work Koestler so admired: a human particle with a specific packet, or quantum, of energy that can operate only on a specific level, and never *in between* levels. What *Arrival and Departure II* demonstrated, in keeping with Koestler's own acute mental depression of 1944, is that of course one can suddenly progress *downwards* in the hierarchy when guilt or the Grammatical Fiction is no longer available: this is the significance of Peter's "Grace had been withdrawn, death re-gained (*sic*) its sting. He was condemned to hope again" (MS 2317/2: 3). The withdrawal of grace had left him floundering on a lower level of the hierarchy, from where his actions no longer made any sense. This, too, was Koestler's own experience in the summer of 1944, leading him to the abandonment of the sequel to Peter's story.

In other words, the ethical hierarchy on a personal level at least is in a constant state of flux, with different people operating on different levels of the hierarchy, and each person understanding his own actions according to the rules of that hierarchical level. Moreover, the same person can find himself at different times in his life at different levels, as Peter Slavek did; without the "energy" of the Grammatical Fiction, actions that once appeared justifiable in terms of conscience now suddenly appear to be no more than wishful thinking for at the lower level of the hierarchy a different set of rules applies. Hence grace appears withdrawn, Peter is condemned to hope again.

Thus, what Koestler had sought to demonstrate in a very subtle manner in his novels - the irreducibility of ethical absolutes - he had now formulated in a scientific principle, drawing on evidence from the human and physical disciplines.

Reductionism in ethics

Koestler had seen at first hand the danger of totalitarian systems

such as Marxism that attempt to explain all phenomena from the one viewpoint (i.e. looking down on the staircase). The essay concludes on a pessimistic note - something his critics were to notice in virtually all his works from 1945 onwards - as he lists five examples of the tragedy of ethics in its insistence upon utilising a reductionist approach (Koestler 1945a: 248).

The five "degenerated ethical systems in our time" have indeed been encountered in the ethical novels. These can be listed as:

1. The obsession for analysing and reducing ethical values which leads to nihilism. Koestler quotes Dostoevsky: "When he believes he does not believe that he believes, and when he does not believe, he does not believe that he does not believe" (Koestler 1945a: 248). If the world is homogeneous, its laws can be traced upward to God or downward to chaos; reductionist ethics takes the latter course.

2. The projection of biological laws on to the level of human ethics. Thus, Darwinian conceptions such as "the survival of the fittest" lead to Fascism.

3. The reduction of ethics to the level of psychology. Koestler is particularly opposed to Freudian psychology, which he likened to the reduction of live organisms to their chemical components. 'Conscience' in the Freudian system is traced to the super-ego: Koestler argues that this is a reductive analysis that leaves out the essential feature of the deed or thought analysed, namely the freedom on the part of the subject. Hence, Peter is seen deliberately as being caught between two opposing acts - fleeing to a neutral country or becoming engaged in the underground movement against Fascism - and Koestler highlights the freedom that Peter has by leaving until the last possible moment his hero's eventual, and illogical, course of action.

In short, Freudian psychology, in Koestler's view, belongs wholly to the deterministic science that he abhorred. The reduction of ethical values to the level of psychology was to become one of his most common targets, typified in his later term *ratomorphism* - the belief, once put forward by behaviourists such as Skinner, that human behaviour could be reduced to the analysis of stimulus-response reinforcement patterns as studied in the laboratory rat.

4. The transfer from a lower to a higher (ethical) level of mathematical measurement. This opposite approach to reductionist ethics is exemplified by the Commissar-ethics of Gletkin and Ivanov. Koestler believes that we are so used to working with numbers that the logic of applying mathematics to ethics can seem like common sense: "we accept as quite logical that a given number of people should be sacrificed in the interest of a greater number of people" (Koestler 1945a: 252). Such a mathematical concept is hardly new to ethics: indeed, Jeremy Bentham presented a 'hedonistic calculus' two centuries ago, suggesting that factors such as the intensity and duration of the pleasure or pain resulting from one's actions can be introduced mathematically when deciding whether or not an action would increase the total sum of happiness in the world (Bentham 1789), this being the central principle of Bentham's version of utilitarianism³.

Koestler immediately highlights the nub of the Benthamite dilemma: at what precise point does the healer's lancet change into the butcher's hatchet?

5. The transfer of values from passive contemplation to practical action: i.e. Yogi-ethics. The problem is that the Contemplative focuses his attention on the vertical jumps in the staircase, and neglects the detailed factual interrelationships on the horizontal planes. This, in Koestler's opinion, leads to a naive and amateur approach to social problems. Inertia can therefore replace action.

Contemplation should be the opposite of scientific or religious dogmatism. If Koestler is appalled by the Commissar-ethics of Stalinist Russia, he is at pains to stress that Christian dogmatism is certainly not the only alternative. He quotes C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* in which the devil gives advice to a satanic recruit:

"Above all do not attempt to use science (I mean the real sciences) as a defence against Christianity. They will positively encourage him to think about realities he can't touch and see.

³Otherwise known as universal ethical hedonism, this is the most widely discussed consequential ethical theory. Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Henry Sidgwick were its main champions. The theory proposes that right actions are those which produce the greatest total pleasure for everyone affected by their consequences. Conversely, wrong actions are those which fail to produce this greatest total pleasure.

There have been sad cases among the modern physicists." (Lewis: 1940: 14)

One might think that Koestler would be only too happy to find an eminent theologian and novelist concur with his non-materialistic view of science. However, Koestler is quite angry with Lewis' implication "that the only alternative to dogmatism is the Church of England, and that the only approach to what we can't touch and see is through Christian dogma", accusing Lewis for being "disarmingly naive coming from a Fellow of Magdalen College in 1944" (Koestler 1945a: 254).

Koestler firmly advocates a synthesis of the two approaches of looking at the staircase.

"The basic paradox of man's condition, the conflict between freedom and determinism, ethics and logic...can only be resolved if, while thinking and acting on the horizontal plane of our existence, we yet remain constantly aware of the vertical dimension." (Koestler 1945a: 255)

It has to be said that Koestler, as in his future scientific works, is better at diagnosing the problem than offering a remedy. This author shares the views of one reviewer in thinking that his own solution - namely the teaching of contemplation in schools alongside science and physical education - is undeniably weak and disappointing.

"It is not Mr Koestler's fault if the picture is one of utter confusion. Neither can he be blamed that his attempts at finding solutions for some of the problems he analyses are rather futile." (Kloetzel 1945)

His argument that social integration can never be achieved by focusing upon the intellect alone makes it all the more difficult for Koestler the yogi to come forward with a persuasive argument, which would tend to appeal only to the mind. It was difficult, if not impossible, for Peter to convince Sonia of the rightness of his actions; Rubashov had encountered the same problem with Gletkin. Koestler ironically finds himself in the same position as his fictional characters with this essay, and admits as much in his conclusion.

"It [this integration] has to emerge, facilitated by a 'vertical' approach which brings to the dry concepts of part-ness, love and all-oneness the igniting spark of experienced reality. Neither the saint nor the revolutionary can save us; only the synthesis of the two. Whether we are capable of achieving it I do not know." (Koestler 1945a: 256)

The notion of synthesis was to dominate his ethical thinking until his

death, almost forty years later. Indeed, so important were the ideas in this essay that he put them in novelistic form on one final occasion, when in 1972 he wrote the much-underrated novel, *The Call-Girls*.

2.iii. THE CALL-GIRLS

Approaches to Survival

The Call-Girls is important to Koestlerian scholars for two reasons. The *first edition* is the only written work in the Koestler canon to contain an overtly theological, indeed Christocentric, piece⁴. Secondly, it can be considered as autobiographical, dealing with the ethical implications of the hierarchy as Koestler experienced them.

The single theme to the book, Koestler later stated, is "mankind's race towards self-destruction" (Koestler 1979: 175). The action of the novel takes place during a global crisis. But the novel's theme is once again the arena of free will and determinism. In short, the protagonists of the novel face much the same choices as Spartacus, Rubashov and Peter had encountered in the ethical trilogy of the 1940s. (Indeed, Koestler clearly intended, though apparently failed, to imply that Jesus faced a similar choice by shifting the Gethsemane dialogue between Father and Son to the march to Calvary. Cohen at least recognises the connection between the Christological prologue and the central story: MS 2421/1.) The novel is, therefore, a direct continuation of the fictionalisation in Koestler's ethics, only in this instance the ethical dilemma first raised in *The Gladiators* - whether or to what extent a noble end justifies ignoble means - is sharpened into the question: "When may man inflict pain in the interests of

⁴The Prologue (Koestler 1972: 9-15) is based on Jesus' thoughts, as Koestler perceives them, on the way to Calvary and is noted for typical Koestlerian detail on the physical aspects of torture, and for the manner in which the author transmits blame for the human condition to the Creator. The Prologue and Kafkaesque Epilogue about chimeras were removed from later editions as "both critics and friends" failed to see the connection between these pieces and the central story (Koestler 1979: 175).

humanity?"

It requires little imagination on the part of the reader to draw parallels at the beginning of the novel to Koestler's Alpbach Symposium of the spring of 1968. The physical location of Alpbach, Koestler's alpine retreat - and in 1968 the apotheosis of the attempted synthesis that Koestler had declared his aim in 1945 - was used by Koestler in his description of the alpine village of Schneedorf. The title of the symposium, "Approaches to Survival", seems to mirror Koestler's urgency and concern for the survival of the species in the light of his, and Paul MacLean's, scientific theories on the instability of the human brain.

The novel's participants come from a wide range of disciplines - just as those invited to Alpbach in 1968 represented various academic fields. As for the misleading title (for once, Koestler departed from the antithetical formula of most of his works), the "call-girls" are the scientists who spend their lives moving from one conference to another, as Dr Harriet Epsom explains:

"...I am an academic call-girl. We are all call-girls in this bus...It becomes a habit, maybe an addiction. You get a long-distance telephone-call from some professional busybody at some foundation or university - 'sincerely hope you can fit it into your schedule - it will be a privilege to have you with us - return fare economy-class and a modest honorarium of...' Or maybe no honorarium at all, and in the end you are out of pocket. I am telling you, it's an addiction." (Koestler 1972: 23)

The action of the novel takes place during the week of the symposium, as one by one the invited luminaries air their theories. But their arguments are almost over-rehearsed and nobody listens to each other - the breakdown of communication that Carlet noted in *The Gladiators* returns with a vengeance. Meanwhile, the storm-clouds of war are gathering and one by one, the academics are recalled to their institutions. The novel concludes with the tape-recordings of the proceedings being deliberately burnt by Miss Carey, a subject of an earlier experiment that had gone almost fatally wrong.

The wit and the pessimism that suffuse the book are neatly encapsulated in the words of Claire

"There must be some calves out somewhere in a field, which I can hear but not see - each with a bell round its neck, each tinkling

a monologue all for itself, to which no one listens. Exactly like having a symposium?" (Koestler 1972: 41)

If the novel reflected Koestler's weary cynicism, at least it also demonstrated his sense of humour - and an ability to write convincing characterisations of women.

Not for the first time, a critic saw fit to draw a comparison between Koestler's work and that of George Orwell. Writing in *The Sunday Times*, Burton said "You might call it *Nineteen Eighty-Four* written to amuse rather than to scare" (Burton 1973).

Nikolai Solovief

Few critics shared Burton's enthusiasm for Koestler's new novel. The majority found it anticlimactic, representing as it did the first novel for twenty years from the author of *Darkness at Noon*. Consensus opinion accused the writer of using his characters as mouthpieces for Koestlerian dialogue - "*Call-Girls* has the wrong number" wrote one reviewer (MS 2421/1); *The Call-Girls* was said to lack the authenticity of the ethical trilogy, the latter having drawn more directly (or so it was said) upon the author's first-hand experiences.

As with his early novels, one should not necessarily be caught up in what can easily become a "spot the philosopher" game trying to match Koestler's real-life adversaries with fictional counterparts. Koestler was always more interested in ideas than people, and by 1972 autobiography was well behind him⁵. Why is *The Call-Girls* of such crucial importance if it is so apparently remote from the Stalinist experiences that inspired the early ethical novels? The answer, I believe, is that the novel served a vital purpose to its author, as Koestler's late re-evaluation and practical examination of the problems of the hierarchy as outlined in theory in *The Yogi and the Commissar*

⁵Harold Harris, in his introduction to *Stranger on the Square*, makes it very clear that autobiography was not at the top of Koestler's agenda in later life. "Many of his friends, including myself, had been urging him for years to continue with his autobiography..." (Harris, in Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 1). It seems reasonable to conclude therefore that neither Koestler nor Harris interpreted *The Call-Girls* in an autobiographical manner.

II.

Hamilton noted "there is much [in Niko] of Koestler" (Hamilton 1975: 101). But neither Hamilton nor Pearson, whose analysis of the novel quite properly places it in the ethical context of the Yogi-Commissar ethical spectrum (Pearson 1978: Ch. 8), goes beyond the simplistic autobiographical inspiration to linking Solovief's ideas to those of Koestler and thence back to the central characters of the earlier novels.

At two important junctures, Nikolai Solovief's views echo those of his literary creator - in his discovery of Kepler and the "oceanic feeling" that comes from his contemplation of mathematics (Koestler 1972: 47); and his endorsement of the need, proposed in the novel by Valenti, "to change the Chemistry" of the human brain (Koestler 1972: 169). The voyage of discovery that Koestler had made, from Kepler and mathematics to Paul MacLean and schizophysiology, seems to be mirrored in Niko. Most striking, perhaps, is Niko's apology for his initial insistence on a psychopharmacological method of 'changing the Chemistry', an apology that Koestler made in the Alpbach Symposium of 1968, when in Hamilton's words, he seemed to be backing away from his notion of psychopharmaceutical salvation (Hamilton 1982: 356). Thus, in the novel we read

"Niko made an effort to pull himself together. Where had he gone off the rails? When he had let himself be carried away by the idea of 'biological tampering'. If there was a road to survival, it pointed in that direction. But did he really believe in that 'if'? The familiar, nagging pain had returned." (Koestler 1972: 170)

If it sounds familiar, compare Niko with Spartacus after the latter's disastrous human experiment had gone as horribly wrong as the symposium experiment upon the unfortunate Miss Carey.

"What had he done wrong, what had he omitted, to allow the horde to wriggle from his hold...? He had walked the straight road, evil past behind and goal in front, had turned neither left nor right. Or was this the very error, to walk the straight and direct road - was it necessary to make detours, to walk the crooked roads?" (Koestler 1939: 114)

It is clear that Solovief now found himself bound by the same Law of Detours that had ensnared Spartacus. Solovief, like Koestler in the

aftermath of *The Ghost in the Machine*⁶, was caught up in the ends-means dilemma in which the path for survival necessitated a very cold-blooded treatment of the Miss Careys of this world. The Law of Detours applies equally to the scientist as it does to the revolutionary - as Koestler was finding to his cost.

The picture that emerges of Solovief is of a scientist whose later work embraced parapsychology (witness Solovief's interest in Brother Tony, a firm believer in *psi*) and neurophysiology in a desperate search for the solution to man's flawed chemistry: in other words, Solovief and Koestler are remarkably similar.

Koestler was to admit in his suicide note that it was to Cynthia that he owed "the relative peace and happiness" of the last period in his life "and never before" (MS 2308). The feelings expressed in Koestler's suicide note bear comparison with Nikolai Solovief's own sentiments: "What kept him going through his forties and fifties was partly Claire and the two children" (Koestler 1972: 53). Certainly some of the most moving passages in *The Call-Girls* concern the devotion and tenderness of Solovief to Claire, their affinity and closeness in marked contrast to the sexual intrigue of the other symposium participants.

Finally, Claire's enthusiasm for an "emergency alliance" is reminiscent of Mamaime's backing and energetic contribution to the proposed 1946 Easter Conference and the unlikely partnership of Russell, Orwell and Koestler.

Put together, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Solovief has shared many of the experiences and aspirations of his creator, and that these are perceived in the author's mind as important factors behind Solovief, like Koestler, pursuing the ethical laws of the hierarchy.

The character of Solovief stands also as a direct successor to the Rubashov. The most obvious point of contact, which has been commented

⁶The most obvious allusion to *The Ghost in the Machine* is found in iko's repeated warnings to the conference of a situation without precedent in history. "In all previous generations man had had to come to terms with the prospect of his death as an individual; the present generation was the first to face the prospect of the death of the species." (Koestler 1972: 163) Almost the same form of words is contained in the author's gloomy prognosis in *The Ghost in the Machine* (Koestler 1967: 322).

upon by Pearson (Pearson 1978: 125), is Solovief's acknowledgement of toothache, a phenomenon which is immediately identifiable to the reader as Rubashovian.

"'Then what *is* serious?' [Claire]
 'Don't you know? A toothache is serious...' [Niko]
 'Then I am all for toothaches. Have you got one?' [Claire]"
 (Koestler 1972: 142)

The suspicion, at least in my mind, is that the "familiar, nagging pain" that returns to Solovief as he sums up the symposium's findings is intended to remind the reader of the toothache that troubles Rubashov at those moments when the Grammatical Fiction asserts itself.

Not only is there evidence therefore for a post-Rubashovian experience of guilt and conscience in Solovief but we can also trace its roots to a First or Second Hearing encounter of Solovief with Burch, one of the materialistic scientists at the symposium. Burch stands firmly alongside Ivanov and Gletkin in his philosophy, but perhaps the significant aspect of this encounter is that, as Pearson points out, Solovief fears that Burch, like Number One, might be right (Pearson 1978: 125). Coupled with this nagging doubt is the awareness that not all his contemporaries have survived.

"Must one's obsession with the perils of mankind exclude the pleasure of being alive - of being alive still?...Perhaps the trouble was that the prophets of doom were also the merchants of gloom..." (Koestler 1972: 43)

Such guilt, of course, is precisely that of Peter Slavek in *Arrival and Departure*. But by placing the guilt upon the character of Solovief, the author is intentionally and openly admitting that he still remembered Hillary's phrase, "The survivor is always the debtor" and that ethics, for Koestler, remained a guilt-ridden occupation, thirty years after his departure from revolutionary ethics.

The hierarchy in action

Pearson has argued that the Burch-Solovief dichotomy represents Koestler's spectrum transposed from the political to the scientific arena (Pearson 1980: 125). Burch is viewed in Pearson's thesis as the new commissar. However, Pearson also admits that the yogi-commissar

polarity does not readily translate into the scientific-ethical arena, for Solovief, like Rubashov, is no yogi. His ethics are as ends-oriented as Burch's: both ultimately wish to change human behaviour, Burch by behaviourist means and Solovief by adapting Valenti's psychopharmacological thesis to the human brain.

What Pearson fails to realise is that this is the whole point of the hierarchical system as seen in practical ethics. Koestler had moved on from the yogi-position with which, I have argued, he struggled in the 1940s. It is hardly surprising that Koestler has Solovief, in calling the conference, studiously avoiding pigeonholing himself at a specific place in the spectrum. The tragedy of the novel in ethical terms is that each of the participants in turn does precisely that.

Burch, for example, stands for the "ratomorphic" model. Indeed, he is identified as such by a fellow scientist at the symposium.

"...it was fashionable to warn students against the heresy of anthropomorphism, of attributing human thoughts and feelings to animals. Now Burch is preaching to us the opposite heresy - that we should not attribute to man thoughts and feelings which are not demonstrable in his rats. As my favourite writer⁷ has said somewhere: the pundits of Burch's school have replaced the anthropomorphic view of the rat with a ratomorphic view of man. I am surprised they are not growing whiskers." (Koestler 1972: 128)

His place in the novel is therefore as an example of those who attempt to reduce ethical values to the level of psychopathology. Burch, meanwhile, from his own step in the staircase cannot understand the neoFreudians.

"Show me a slice of your super-ego under the microscope and I will believe it." (Koestler 1972: 34)

Curiously, one of the few figures to emerge in a sympathetic light from Koestler's characterisations is a monk, Brother Tony Caspari "who will represent the Almighty at the symposium" (Koestler 1972: 32). Brother Tony is an unreconstructed Beloffian⁸ dualist treated with predictable

⁷A veiled reference to Koestler: see, for example, his "The Philosophy of Ratomorphism": Koestler 1967: 15.

⁸After John Beloff; a more appropriate adjective to describe the urtesian dualism of Brother Tony than, say, Popperian, as it represents a more empirically based dualism; see Beloff 1962. The only other *empirical*

disdain by Burch who would rather believe in "little green men from Venus travelling in flying teapots" than in mind or soul. Burch, of course, cannot understand Brother Tony as they occupy different levels of the hierarchy. His description of micro-PK experiments⁹ provokes the most heated exchange of the symposium. Only Soloviev is truly sympathetic to Tony's argument, which places him towards the yogi end of the spectrum: but, almost as if anticipating Pearson's contention that the yogi is as ends-oriented as the commissar, Brother Tony points out he is not advocating mysticism *per se*.

"I should have explained that we do not regard contemplation as an end in itself. Rather we regard the contemplative state as the most favourable condition for our purpose, which is to tap the powers of mind at their source...."

'I have tried to explain', Tony said, 'that we have to undergo a rather severe training to protect us against credulity and ... wallowing in muddy mysticism. We are not attracted by the fog, but by the light.' (Koestler 1972: 134, 137)

Tony continues to describe almost *verbatim* Koestler's description of the scientist's approach to the staircase that leaves most of the staircase in darkness, shedding light only on one or two horizontal planes on the hierarchy.

Most importantly, Koestler's sympathetic handling of Brother Tony suggests the author was still sympathetic to the existence of Third Order reality, for his pursuit of *psi* clearly takes him further up the hierarchy to the level of reality beyond the perceptual and conceptual that Koestler had defined as the 'occult' in *Dialogue with Death*. It is clear from his description of Valenti's experiments upon the unfortunate Miss Carey that Soloviev found salvation by electrodes or drugs repugnant; from the *Yogi...* essays on, Koestler hankered for spiritual rebirth: the synthesis of saint and revolutionary, Brother Tony and Valenti.

The other participants demonstrate the truth of Koestler's 1945

scientist of note to espouse Brother Tony's implied dualism is Sir John Eccles (Popper and Eccles 1977) but as Beloff points out (Beloff 1993: 309) Popper and Eccles prefer the noun "interactionism" to describe their philosophy.

⁹i.e. Psychokinesis (PK) on a micro-scale; the pioneering work alluded to by Brother Tony is the work of Schmidt. See Beloff 1993: 171-176.

thesis that science was becoming increasingly fragmented and the horizontal levels correspondingly small. Many found the arguments of the different camps (or as Koestler would have preferred, different levels) petty; the dialogue was seen as tedious and technical. Others saw the novel as a faithful parody of the academic symposium circuit. Few, if any, made the connection between this work and the theory of the hierarchy proposed in 1945.

A failure of theory and ideas

Pearson has however attempted to elucidate Webberley's thesis that there is a common thread running throughout Koestler's writings, as discernible in *The Call-Girls* as in *The Gladiators*. Pearson proposes that the common denominator in Koestler's work, formulated in the *Yogi...* essays, is the failure of theory and ideas that has caused the human condition of the present century (Pearson 1978: 27).

Pearson's approach is innovative, for it at once shifts the emphasis away from the heroes of Koestler's work - Spartacus, Rubashov, Peter, Solovief and so on - to those who represent a failed *status quo*: the Roman Empire, Gletkin and Ivanov, Dr Bolgar, and Burch. It could be argued that Koestler himself shifted the emphasis from the heroism of the ethical trilogy to the "ethics of survival books", *Thieves In The Night* (Koestler 1946) and *Promise and Fulfilment* (Koestler 1949a). "If power corrupts, the reverse is also true: persecution corrupts the victim..." wrote Koestler in a later postscript to *Thieves...* (Koestler 1965: 335).

The fault of the *status quo*, of course, in Koestlerian terms, is that the ethical hierarchy being utilised at that moment is inadequate - thus, for example, in the present century, the world of Newtonian physics is inadequate to assimilate quantum physics. In Pearson's analysis, what emerges most strongly from Koestler's historic analysis is the failure of the Gletkins, Bolgars and Burchs to solve the problems with which they are confronted, whether of a renegade Bolshevik or a young war hero.

The Yogi-Commissar spectrum, in theory and in practice, is a

manifestation of the same nonpolitical phenomenon

"...the collapse of Christianity in particular and of religion in general as the transcendent ordering principle of Western civilisation." (Pearson 1978: 19)

Pearson suggests that the Slaves' Revolt in *The Gladiators* is simply the ultimate secular revolt against the Christian world-view. His interpretation of the first ethical novel is that even if Spartacus had known of Christianity, the revolt would not have succeeded for the revolutionary praxis would have remained the same. Evidence for this, he states, can be found in the Prologue to the first edition of *The Call-Girls*, where "for man and Jesus alike, heaven is an illusion" (Pearson 1978: 41).

What Pearson labels as Koestler's "reversal of Christian symbolism" continues with the failure of the two trials invoked at the end of *Darkness at Noon*: the trial of Christ that parallels the trial of Rubashov are failures of ends over means and means over ends respectively. In *Arrival and Departure*, the failure is more opaque: for Peter is neither yogi nor commissar, but a man stripped of adolescent fantasies about good and evil.

The fault in such an analysis is that it does not fully explain the ending of Koestler's novels: the 'oceanic sense' that embraces Rubashov, Peter's renunciation of the easy way out, the sense of guilt and foreboding shared by the participants leaving Schneedorf. If the "reversal of Christian symbolism" thesis is accepted, it is also hard to understand why Koestler embraced Kepler so wholeheartedly from youth onwards as a role-model.

Pearson anticipates this criticism by arguing that Kepler, for Koestler, is important because he belongs to neither the old Christian hierarchy nor the new scientific one. Both hierarchies in isolation are fallacious; one only needs to cite Koestler's stinging attack on C. S. Lewis to doubt that Koestler would ever accept that the most appropriate hierarchy to adopt is Christocentric. Did Koestler ever view the hierarchy in religious terms?

"Koestler never saw it as a religious notion. It was simply the structure of the objective order of things, and religion has nothing to do with it except that some religious writers had expressed it better than others. But whereas the religious

understanding had pointed towards an explicit teleology of human existence, Koestler stopped short of this assertion." (Pearson 1978: 111)

The failure of ideas that, in Pearson's view, unifies Koestler's scientific, political and ethical work is therefore not simply "The God That Failed" of Communism but *all the gods that failed*. The *Yogi...* essays, and the hierarchy of modern science described in *The Call-Girls*, are attempts to explain human behaviour in rational terms in a world in which scientific determinism, Marxism and Christianity have attempted to but failed.

Pearson's conclusion is that the characters never break free of this irrationality - which is surely another way of restating Orwell's "loss of intelligence" argument. Koestler's search for a rational structure of mind is "essentially a political quest" (Pearson 1978: 136). But the quest does not reach its goal; Pearson's portrait of Koestler is not unlike Hamilton's: "a religious man unable to come to grips with religion in a personal sense" to use Tyndall's summation of the two biographies (Tyndall 1992: 14).

Pearson's analysis undoubtedly has its merits: in particular, it highlights Koestler's need, as expressed in *The Yogi...* essays, to rationalise irrational experiences: such a need is seen as the basic flaw in Koestler's theodicy. It also redresses the balance in literary criticism of Koestler's novels by restating the importance of the opponents to the heroic characters. But it does not answer the question of why Koestler *deliberately* emphasised at key points in his work the irrationality of human behaviour in situations where no logical outcome was possible in Koestler's mind: Rubashov's confession and death, Peter's departure, and so on. Pearson concedes that there may be another, as yet unexplored, side to Koestler's nature. Why is it, that as Koestler himself admitted, he found it impossible to write an infra-red novel without an ultra-violet [mystical] ending?

"There is a strong spiritual side to his writing that also shines through at some of the most unexpected times. The presence of spirit is never wholly absent." (Pearson 1978: 152)

The concept of a hierarchy has, as stated above, given a formal place in Koestler's canon to the reality of the Third Order and the spiritual (or "occult") world inhabited by the Brother Tonys for whom Koestler,

like Solovief in *The Call-Girls*, was full of curiosity, if not admiration. *It is my contention that a genuine synthesis of Koestler's ethics will only be achieved by a recognition of the reality of the Third Order and its importance as part of the hierarchy in which irrational human beings move and think.*

Indeed, implicit in the other major critiques of Koestler's ethical hierarchy, (Toulmin 1979 and Hausman 1966), and explicit in Rivett (Rivett 1947), is the assumption that the hierarchy by definition lacks an apex. Toulmin argues that the type of scientific thinking exemplified in *The Yogi...* is, in any case, outdated and that only the Vienna school of logical empiricism would believe in conforming to the rigid framework of thinking that Koestler regards as "scientific". Koestler's hierarchy is reminiscent of the Leibnitz-Newton debate. Koestler, like Leibnitz, is unable to accept what Toulmin calls a "happenstance" view of scientific contingency. The important point to note is that in order to make sense of the world, *à la Leibnitz*, Koestler has to search for a system of ideas in which the necessity of Divine creation becomes intelligible and apparently irrational concepts can be understood as rational. This search, of course, began with Rubashov, whose dilemma in prison is merely the search for a harmony between the dictates of Newtonian reason and Liebnitzian faith on a contemporary and human level. That, certainly, is the inference drawn by Rivett (Rivett 1947: 91).

Thus the hierarchy, whether or not it is flawed along the lines that Toulmin and Hausman suggest, is distinctly theological: Toulmin himself was the first to use the phrase "theodicy" to describe Koestler's proposed system (Toulmin 1979: 56) and represents Koestler's arguments in wholly theological terms - sin, theodicy and *logos*. However, since Toulmin's misgivings largely focus upon *The Sleepwalkers*, a fuller analysis of Koestler's "theodicy" will follow in Chapter 4.

2. iv. TWILIGHT BAR

"Escapade" or ethics?

Twilight Bar was published simultaneously with *The Yogi...* anthology in a deliberate attempt to boost sales of the play, a tactic acknowledged by his publishers (MS 2373/3: 106). Koestlerian scholars are quick to dismiss the play out of hand as "an escapade", to use the play's sub-title. The exception to this is Mark Levene who suggests that the play is noteworthy for its moral theme and provides a link between Koestler's literary and scientific output (Levene 1985: 130ff). In marked contrast, Calder's literary analysis of Koestler refers to the play only in the bibliography. The play's author never defended the play in print after its publication, preferring to dismiss it as "a flight from the pressures of reality" (Koestler 1954a: 159). This was the impression he conveyed too to Iain Hamilton.

"Koestler himself, or so he said years later, had no inflated ideas of the play's merits. He had rewritten it mainly for his own amusement, describing it as a diversion, and one completely without literary pretensions." (my italics) (Hamilton 1982: 116)

"Or so he said years later..." Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and the evidence suggests that Koestler's later view of the play is not to be trusted. He had, after all, been equally dismissive of one of his greatest works, *Arrival and Departure*, in a radio tribute to George Orwell in 1960, referring to *Arrival...* as "a very bad book of mine"¹⁰. Also, Mamaime Koestler, whilst expecting the American production of *Twilight Bar* to be "an awful flop" reports her husband's comment that "it might be good theatre". (Goodman (ed) 1985: 24). Finally, one would hardly expect Koestler to post a copy of the play to one of the most influential and famous movie studio moguls if he did not think it had some merit. Yet this was precisely what Koestler did as soon as it was published, perhaps hoping that, through Sir Alexander Korda, MGM might be interested in filming the play (MS 2373/4: 64).

¹⁰Heppenstall, R. *George Orwell: A Programme of the recorded miniscences...* BBC Third Programme, Wednesday 2 November 1960. Photocopy -prescript. MS 2340/2: 24.

A further reason for examining the ethical content of the play is the precise date of its inception in revised form, in the summer of 1944. Koestler's journal, as has been noted already, refers extensively to his mental health problems of that period; *Twilight Bar* was rewritten as a therapy, as it had been originally in 1933 outside a Moscow cafe; but we now also know that *Twilight Bar* took the place in Koestler's schedule of the completion of *Arrival and Departure II*. We know from the marginal dates inserted alongside the manuscript of the aborted sequel that Peter's story was abandoned on 23 June 1944 (MS 2317/2); Koestler commenced the revision of *Twilight Bar* on or around 4 July¹¹. Any work that effectively ended the revolutionary ethics sequence of successful novels demands careful consideration.

A Benthamite Ethic

At a first glance, *Twilight Bar* is familiar territory. The central character, Glowworm, is a disillusioned journalist taking refuge in the Bar of the title.

"Basically, I am a poet, Sam. Basically I am a dreamer. I close my eyes and dream of happiness." (Koestler 1945b: 9)

The setting is an island republic at the present time; but once again, there is revolution in the air, except in *Twilight Bar* the ruthless logic of Ivanov or the idealism of Spartacus is reduced to caricature in the figure of Mary. An early conversation between Mary and Glowworm would indicate Koestler is merely going to restate old arguments.

Mary: "This filthy order has lasted long enough; it shan't last any longer."

Glow: "There I agree with you, Mary. But I don't agree with your methods. You see, it's all a question of Ends and Means." (Koestler 1945b: 16)

But Koestler has a new angle to explore. The consideration of

¹¹*Twilight Bar* was completed on August 15 "in exactly six weeks" (MS 2317/4: 261). On 24 August Koestler refers to one correspondent, Hermann Ould, that he is "trying to finish a book" - this can only be *Arrival and Departure II*. We must conclude that Koestler did attempt to continue *Arrival and Departure II* after finishing *Twilight Bar*, although no written work from this period can be traced. Note also this is the last reference Koestler makes to the sequel. (MS 2317/4: 261)

revolutionary ethics is suddenly swept aside by the arrival in the republic of two aliens, Alpha and Omega, - investigators from "the Federation" - who solemnly pronounce that the earth is sick with the pollution of unhappiness. In the galaxy, of which the inhabitants of earth are largely ignorant, a cosmic war is being fought between the forces of happiness and misery. Infected by the fallout from the forces of misery, the earth has become a prime target for colonisation. With a Wellsian knack of prophecy, Koestler describes the means by which this colonisation will be carried out: the Delta Ray, which by killing the earth's inhabitants but leaving buildings intact remarkably anticipates the invention of the neutron bomb!

The final choice of planet that will succumb to the death ray will be announced in three days. Effectively, this acts as an ultimatum, with the selection process clear to Glowworm and his friends at the outset.

Omega: "The planet on which life has the least meaning."

Alpha: "The one where pain outweighs pleasure."

Omega: "Which lives for toil and not for leisure."

Alpha: "Where hatred is stronger than love."

Omega: "Where wisdom yields to stupidity."

Alpha: "Where value wanes before vanity."

Omega: "In other words, the unhappiest one."

Alpha: "For that planet has no aim and no justification, no cosmic *raison d'être*, nothing to regret when it goes." (Koestler 1945b: 27)

Koestler's utopian dreams are heard for the last time in Glowworm's soliloquy ("Humanity's last chance to redeem its wasted milleniums") at the end of Act I. The dreamer, in fact, gets his chance when Mary's Gletkin-like approach to the crisis - "The events will take their inevitable course, determined by the iron law of history" (Koestler 1945b: 43) - proves insufficient to address the problem of endemic misery. With two days left, Glowworm takes charge initiating a Rooseveltian "New Era" of happiness.

If, from Act III onwards, the play fails to capitalise on the promise of the opening scenario, as many critics suggested, what follows remains an interesting and typically Koestlerian blend of ethics and freely adapted personal experience. Lucy echoes Rubashov's desire to study astronomy, and Omega voices a soliloquy that reminds the reader yet again of Koestler's hero-worship of Kepler. Pointers to the

original Moscow composition of the play, *Bar du Soleil*, can still be found, as in the Glowworm-Omega love scene in Act III and the satirical references to Russia joining the New Era¹².

Further evidence of the qualities of Koestler's writing, despite his later protestations of its literary clumsiness, is the willingness of several theatres to produce the play. Jean Villar produced the French translation in Paris; the play also saw productions in America and Scandinavia, and later revivals on German television and as a BBC radio play (Koestler, A. & C., 1984: 73-74). The production photographs that survive reinforce the view that Glowworm owed much to his creator - in his light suit and hairstyle, he could easily be mistaken for Koestler (MS 2456/3 Photo. 16). Alpha and Omega are no more unacceptable than the sort of science fiction humanoids that Captain Kirk would encounter in the cult series, *Star Trek*, two decades later, and to which, in the production photographs, they bear a remarkable resemblance. The reviews generally were far from damning, even if many hinted at the potential of Koestler as a playwright rather than the quality of the play per se.

The happiness quotient

From the ethicist's viewpoint, the significance of the play lies in Koestler's emphasis on the happiness quotient: in the mathematical logic of Ivanov in *Darkness...or* to a lesser extent in Lentulus' philosophy of gladiatorial survival in *The Gladiators*, one can detect a hint that behind the revolutionary ethic was merely the old Benthamite numerical philosophy: the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Now, the numerical argument is given full rein; statistic after statistic seems to be the only standard by which happiness can be measured and thus disaster at the hands of the aliens

¹²The cafe song that inspired Koestler to write the play included the lyrics "If you love me, you must steal for me" which Glowworm offers to do, rhetorically at least: "We may steal your moon"/"I give it to you..." The Russian reference is found in the remark of one of the characters, Walker: "Moscow has...started a purge against everybody who is unhappy...According to official statistics, [their happiness quotient is] 3562 per cent." Koestler 1945b: 59.

averted.

But statistics do not tell the whole story, and Koestler is aware that the nature of the happiness as measured by his Happiness Quotient through external means is ephemeral. In the final act, the aliens are arrested and officials declare that their story and the ultimatum is a hoax. Glowworm, along with the bar-tender Sam and the others, return to their old haunts at the eponymous bar. But the conclusion is open-ended: the three days have not yet elapsed. Might it still be possible that the earth would be destroyed, that the ultimatum is real? It is left to Koestler-Glowworm to voice such doubts: "Confidence Trick or End of the World?" (Koestler 1945b: 75)

The equation of greatest happiness for the greatest number of people had been forced upon the populace. Without the threat of extinction, there was no reason for the equation to be tampered with in any way.

"When they were frightened they decided to be happy, because they had no other choice. And they tasted happiness and found that it was good; they attempted the impossible and found that it worked. Then, when they ceased to be frightened, they said: Now that the danger has passed we can be unhappy again; and with a sigh of relief they rushed back to their old misery." (Koestler 1945b: 76)

The final exchange between Sam and Glowworm emphasises the state of uncertainty as the curtain is brought down.

Sam: "Still, I would like to know whether we have been cheated or not."

Glow: "We'll soon know, Sam. It's eleven now. In an hour it will be midnight." (Koestler 1945b: 76)

The uncertainty is essential in understanding Koestler's ethics of the period, and the point of the play. It is, furthermore, easily overlooked as Koestler's *precis* of the play in 1954 states categorically that the aliens are imposters¹³. Only at the end of his life does Koestler state "a lingering doubt remains: perhaps the scouts are genuine after all?" (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 73).

Theatre critics certainly noted the ambiguous ending of the productions of *Twilight Bar* in America and France. The key question -

¹³Koestler 1954a: 158. It is possible that Koestler was remembering the 33 version and that the 1944 ending was rewritten with a more ambiguous ending - but that in itself points to the importance of the published ending.

will people choose happiness or obliteration? - did have added weight in the month of the play's publication - August 1945. "He has built a situation which would have seemed fantastic four weeks ago, but which seems fairly realistic today" commented North (MS 2426/4). *The New York Times* also noted the "timely" (post-Hiroshima) appearance of the aliens' ultimatum, adding "its grim gaiety is neatly in the mood of contemporary theater" (MS 2426/4). Thus, by not offering any easy solutions to the inhabitants of the fictitious republic faced with obliteration, Koestler captured the uncertainty of the time.

This is seen as a failing by many of Koestler's critics who see the play's ending as a more blatant example of the ambiguity of *Darkness*.... Koestler, according to his critics, is better at raising questions than answering them and this is nowhere better demonstrated than in *Twilight Bar*. Bates (MS 2426/4) accused Koestler of failing to transcend the "either/or" dilemma in both *The Yogi*... and *Twilight Bar*. Koestler faces the reader or theatre-goer with stark choices that echo the choices faced by Rubashov and Slavek; what he does not do is to make the decision for the reader himself.

There is a grain of truth in such accusations. Ethically, as in the revolutionary ethics cycle of novels, Koestler was still seeking a way out of the ends-means dilemma. The Benthamite happiness-quotient ideal proposed in the play was, in his view, as unsuccessful as revolutionary ethics had been to his earlier fictional heroes. It was therefore only right that the play ended with no solution, leaving the theatre-goer uncertain over the aliens' credentials. In short, Koestler himself had not yet overcome the "either/or" dilemma.

But it is also important to remember that Koestler came from a different, more European, background than English writers such as Orwell, a tradition in which ambiguity may be more acceptable. This is certainly Calder's opinion, commenting at the outset of her comparison of Orwell and Koestler that the latter learnt his politics in a climate of violence (Calder 1968: 15). It would be understandable if a middle-european survivor of the Nazi "solution" was now less than ready to offer his. The uncertainty of Koestler's work of the period mirrors the uncertain future his readers faced in post-war Europe.

"Koestler was really writing fiction for readers who did not know what they were looking for." (Calder 1968: 160)

This explanation of the "flawed nature" (Calder) of his work and the emphasis on individual characters inadequate for the performance of the ethical duties required of them is endorsed in a letter written by Koestler to one of his readers just before the revision of *Twilight Bar* and its ambiguous ending. "The writer's job is to stimulate, but not to work out prescriptions" (MS 2372/4: 201). The ambiguity of the play is therefore intentional; the "stimulation" of Rubashov's confession and death, Peter's "loss of intelligence" and departure, and the possibility that Alpha and Omega were not frauds after all, demand that the reader look beyond Commissar-ethics to those higher planes of the hierarchy where one's behaviour is directly affected by one's perception of Third Order reality.

Koestler's pessimism

The play is also essential in understanding the evolution of Koestler's pessimism, the trait which Orwell most readily identified with Koestler's ethics. For in spite of its apparent frivolity - Koestler's final word on the play cites the Chief of Police's song from the beginning of Act III¹⁴ - *Twilight Bar* is a dark work. It is fear that drives the emergency government to improve the 'happiness quotient', and once the fear of destruction is removed, the perceived misery of the *status quo* returns. Fear, Bates noted, had been the dominant force behind Koestler's recent work. There was little to commend humanity to the alien visitors; on the contrary, the idea that the earth was the battleground for the forces between happiness and misery does point towards the schizophysiology thesis of the *Janus* works that followed. Hence Levene argues that the cosmic war is an allegory of the "faulty brain that causes man's endemic insanity" (Levene 1985: 130).

¹⁴"Hark, ye people, lend your ears,/Blow your noses, wipe your ars./Gods on Olympus are your kin - / Who told you pleasure was a sin?/ Who ld the maidens to be chaste?/ Each unkissed kiss is a deadly waste." Koestler 1945b: 47; quoted in its entirety in Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 74.

Thus, the guilt of the individual heroes of the revolutionary ethics trilogy is now transposed to a collective group, the inhabitants of the republic visited by the aliens. No single individual appears to be credited with responsibility for the dilemma faced by the republic: the flaw is shared by all humanity. Schizophysiology will give the flawed design of the human species an evolutionary basis. *Twilight Bar* can be viewed as the first work to suggest that any ethical system thus based that does not address the flawed nature of humanity will not bring happiness.

It also answers critics such as Rivett who argue that a Benthamite ethic will solve the problems posed in Koestler's novels. Rivett states that post-Yogi, Koestler underestimates the "English tradition of gradual reform" (Rivett 1947: 92).

"Since the time of Bentham, we have been trying with increasing success not only to show that the use of good means is morally expedient but also to justify that belief by deliberate invention." (Rivett 1947: 92)

"The use of good means" is at the disposal of the emergency government in *Twilight Bar* - yet underlying happiness for the greatest number of people remains as elusive as ever. There is nothing to suggest that more gradual reform than the three days allowed the republic will solve the problem. In that respect, *The Yogi and the Commissar II* and *Twilight Bar* make the same point, even if the actual solution is still beyond Koestler in 1945.

Similarly, the symposium in *The Call-Girls* may only have lasted a week (or less for some of the participants) but Koestler leaves us with no illusions: if the symposium had lasted several years, the result would still have been the futile stalemate in which those on different planes on the ethical hierarchy fail to communicate their ideas to one another. By 1972, Koestler's own pessimism would be so deeply embedded that Harriet Epsom's observation of Solovief could almost have been written with Koestler in mind:

"He looks like the captain of a sinking ship, determined to go down with it." (Koestler 1972: 184)

Significantly, in the Danube edition with the Epilogue now omitted, these words become the final sentence of the book.

One might assume that as Koestler moved away from evolutionary ethics

towards a hierarchical system of ethics, such pessimism would be alleviated by hope of a possible synthesis between the Contemplative and Scientist. But by transferring the concept of guilt to the group rather than to individuals, the power of the individual conscience or Grammatical Fiction to cause a shift in hierarchical thinking is radically weakened. Grammatical Fiction acts upon individuals, not species.

Hence the philosophical isolation which Levene traces to this important period in Koestler's life (Levene 1985: 149) mingled with a sense of theological frustration. The guilt of individuals such as Rubashov or Slavek is relatively easy to assuage. But once Koestler begins to think of an inherent flaw in the human *psyche*, as I hope I have shown was the case in 1945, it requires something much more dramatic than individual guilt to provide the impetus for a shift in hierarchical ethics. Carlet - "Faith is the last resort through which Koestler can entertain hope for the future" (MS 2317/2: 161) - and Levene have both observed the importance of Koestler's faith that the failure of evolutionary ethics served only to strengthen, yet neither has explained it. But by stressing the shift in guilt from the individual to the group, as I have attempted - and which Koestler demonstrates in the feeling of shared despair and responsibility at the symposium's failure in *The Call-Girls* - such faith is understandable. Unfortunately, Koestler does not define his new faith in *The Invisible Writing*, but as Carlet states, merely reminds us that it grew in his later novels (MS 2317/2: 159).

One can deduce from my thesis thus far that Koestler's faith was inextricably bound up with his perception of the reality of the Third Order. How else other than a belief in the eventual recognition by the group of the existence of the Third Order can the group's happiness come about, in the light of the "catastrophic gradualism" exposed in 1945? Koestler's problem, and the primary reason for his pessimism was that

"Nowhere he looked in Western Europe was there any suggestion of vital belief, much less of a new god evolving through the ethical consciousness of men." (Levene 1985: 150)

"Vital belief" should not be interpreted as Koestler's endorsement of

mysticism *per se*. His continued abhorrence of the word, the stress upon a synthesis of Yogi and Commissar, and the fact that the mystical "ghost" scene was rewritten at Koestler's insistence in the dramatisation of *Arrival and Departure*, suggest that Koestler still sought a system that was readily amenable to rational analysis. But "vital belief", when all is said and done, is what separated Rubashov from his interrogators (at the end), Peter Slavek from Sonia, Koestler's portrayal of Richard Hillary from many of his non-flying compatriots. The point is that "belief" is only applicable to an invisible, arguably irrational world beyond what we can see and know - beyond, therefore, the perceptual and conceptual orders of reality that Koestler described in *Dialogue with Death*. "Vital belief" describes Koestler's attitude to the existence, or otherwise, of the Third or spiritual Order of reality. Koestler's pessimism was due to the fact that so few others saw things his way.

"Change of heart": metanoia in Koestler's writing

If Benthamite ethics are found wanting in *Twilight Bar*, Orwell also warned against the dangers of "Catastrophic Gradualism" in his essay of the same name, published shortly after *Yogi... and Twilight Bar* (Orwell and Angus 1970b: 33-36). Orwell strongly opposes the argument that one must not protest against purges, deportations and secret police forces because these are the price that has to be paid for progress. If each era is, as a matter of course, an improvement upon the last, then it follows that any crime that drives history forward can be justified.

Orwell then raises the question: What is progress? "At this point one has to call in the Yogi to correct the Commissar" (Orwell and Angus 1970b: 35). Koestler is usually deemed, according to Orwell, to be close to the Commissar end of the spectrum: the post-Communist Marxist of Rivett, Pearson and others. In other words, Orwell upheld the established view that Koestler was a humanist. References to spiritual reality in any shape or form are merely a novelist's invention, leading Koestler to a dead end; specific references to a Wordsworthian quasi-mystical "sea of eternity" at the end of *Darkness...* (Orwell's "poplar

trees" as he remembered it!) mere references to childhood memory.

Koestler the Commissar is certainly behind Glowworm's action. Glowworm epitomises Orwell's summing up of Koestler: "He believes in action, in violence where necessary, in government..." (Orwell and Angus 1970b: 35) But Glowworm's reforms do not succeed, however the ambiguous ending may have been reworked in 1944. The change of heart is crucial for humanity to advance. Koestler, Orwell reasons, does not claim that a "religious change of heart" is essential *before* political improvement. True, but for Koestler a change of heart *must* happen.

We can conclude therefore that the significance of *The Yogi and the Commissar II*, taken together with *Twilight Bar*, is that Koestler's 1944-45 work strengthens the emphasis on *metanoia* in Koestler's writing and sows the seed of the idea that a flawed design, rather than individual guilt, lies at the heart of the failure of revolutionary ethics. Secondly, these two pieces of work, arguably much more than the *Arrival and Departure* novels that Orwell found so problematic, bring Orwell and Koestler very close to one another in their suspicion of the "English tradition of gradual reform" and their pessimistic view of humanity. With Koestler's recent writing in the forefront of Orwell's mind in the autumn of 1945 when "Catastrophic gradualism" was written, the two writers now found they had a great deal in common. The fictional character of Peter Slavek, had he returned, would have done little to cement a friendship that meant such a great deal to Koestler. Better, therefore, to leave the sequel to *Arrival*... unfinished and focus on the possibilities of co-operation raised in his letter to Orwell of 18 October 1945.

2.v. THE ETHICAL MOVEMENT OF 1945-46

"Psychological disarmament"

"I would very much like to talk to you about a number of things in which we are both interested." (MS 2374/1: 136)

By the time Koestler wrote these words to Orwell in October 1945, the

two friends were sufficiently close to one another both personally and ethically that Koestler's invitation to spend Christmas in the Koestlers' farmhouse retreat of Bwlch Ocyn received a positive response. Indeed, the writer of *Animal Farm* and his adopted son, Richard (then nineteen months old) were, with Celia, the only guests at Bwlch Ocyn for Christmas 1945 (Goodman (ed) 1985: 24). On a personal note, Orwell seemed attracted to Koestler's sister-in-law, Celia, and Koestler may have harboured a fond wish that Orwell might in fact marry Mamaine's twin sister.

More importantly, Orwell and Koestler had found themselves on the same side in defending freedom of speech after the arrest in April 1945 of the editors of a Freedom Press publication, *War Commentary*. According to Crick, Orwell was "outraged. He regarded the Government's decision to prosecute as a political decision which promised badly for freedom of speech in peacetime" (Crick 1980: 344). With the National Council for Civil Liberties either ambivalent or downright hostile to the anarchists, Orwell then found himself actively participating in a voluntary body for the only time of his life, in his role as Vice Chairman of the Freedom Defence Committee. Its Chairman, Herbert Read, wrote to Koestler prior to the trial urging Koestler to join the sponsors of the Committee. In retrospect, it sounds an insignificant event; but to Koestler, the freedom to argue had been at the very centre of Rubashov's stand against Gletkin.

Perhaps Koestler, like Orwell, found the Freedom Defence Committee too narrowly concerned with defending the cause of victimised British Left-wingers for his European perspective. From "a number of things" in Koestler's mind in October 1945, and the Christmas visit, Koestler now focused his attention specifically upon drawing up a broader committee, or League, which would redefine "democracy" in the aftermath of the end of the War, particularly by stressing the need for the exchange of information between the superpowers. This, Koestler thought, would lead to "the abatement of suspicion" - what he termed psychological

disarmament. The existence of the draft petition and the memorandum¹⁵, and its attribution to Koestler as the primary author, is important in understanding how the theories of *The Yogi and the Commissar* are implemented in practice.

The proposed "League"

The Christmas visit of Orwell to Bwlch Ocyn, in which the idea of "a new League" (Goodman (ed) 1985: 26) was raised, was followed a few days later by a similar discussion with Bertrand Russell, who lived nearby in Llan Festiniog. Mamaime wrote in her diary on 10 January 1946

"Russell seemed to agree with K's ideas, though he didn't want to be involved and said he thought the first step should be a conference of any 12 people with special qualifications, who should discuss what to do to prevent an atomic war." (Goodman (ed) 1985: 26)

This re-emerged in the plot for *The Call-Girls*, where the philosophy of the proposed League and the urgency behind it are hinted at in Bruno Kaletski's opening remarks to the Symposium: "trying to foster mutual understanding between races and nations" (Koestler 1972: 69) sums up Koestler's aims as a practical ethicist in 1945-46.

Russell's misgivings were, according to Koestler at the time, due to the fact that he had confided to Orwell that it was "too late to start any sort of ethical movement, that war will be upon us soon..." (MS 2345/2: 13). In fact, this was not the case. Both Koestler and Orwell, with their journalistic background and previous involvement as war correspondents, saw that the media had a role to play in "mutual understanding between races and nations" and in due course, when Koestler drafted the petition, emphasis was placed on the freedom of information between nations. But Russell came to the discussions from a different background. As he later explained to Koestler, it was this

¹⁵Crick (Crick 1980: 450) acknowledges Koestler as the source for the memorandum (drafted by Orwell) that Crick refers to in Chapter 15. It is highly probable that the memorandum to which Koestler referred on several occasions (Crick's interview with Koestler on 19 October 1972 and Angus' interview with Koestler on 30 April 1964) is the manifesto now housed in the Well Archive for the League for the Rights and Dignity of Man (see below).

emphasis on the media that Russell found unacceptable (MS 2345/2: 87).

Thus the "ethical movement" that Koestler had hoped would be a quadripartite alliance became a tripartite movement between Gollancz, Orwell and Koestler. The primary aim of the petition was to counter the dangers of Commissar-ethics spreading in post-War Europe. Mamaime wrote to Celia on 14 April

"K has hatched a new plot to save the world from the Russians: Russell agreed to it so we (K and I) drafted a petition about it." (Goodman (ed) 1985: 29)

Mamaime was premature in assuming Russell agreed with the wording of the petition. But the significance of this short letter is that it makes it quite clear "we (K and I)" drafted the final petition regarding psychological disarmament and that Orwell's role was therefore confined to the prior manifesto to which Crick refers. The phrase "psychological disarmament" first appears in Orwell's letter of 2 January 1946 to Koestler (MS 2345/2: 6). It seems likely that Koestler alighted upon this phrase and then elaborated upon the concept in the petition, which bears the hallmarks of being Koestler's work rather than Orwell's. The petition and the idea of "psychological disarmament" very quickly appeared in the guise of an influential newspaper article in *The New York Times* in March 1946, later reprinted in *The Trail of the Dinosaur* (Koestler 1955: 17-24) with no reference whatsoever to Orwell - though cynics might argue that Koestler had a blind spot when it came to acknowledging the contribution of others in his own ethical writings.

Certainly it was in Koestler's hands that the petition found its champion: he saw the petition as merely the first step towards what he called "Renaissance (*sic*) - A League for the Defense (*sic*) and development of Democracy" (MS 2345/2: 13) - a more specific title than Orwell's "League for the Freedom and Dignity of Man".

The draft petition

The petition that Koestler and his wife worked on at Bwlch Ocyn in the early months of 1946 does not appear to have been published by any of Koestler's or Orwell's biographers, though Hamilton notes the

important connection between the petition and the *New York Times* article (Hamilton 1982: 105-114); it is therefore reproduced in Appendix 2. Koestler did see fit to reprint part of the petition in *Stranger on the Square* (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 42-43), with important differences to the typescript draft I have examined: Koestler originally intended the "first step...would be an agreement between Great Britain and the USSR", again indicating his editorial control of the draft petition submitted to him by Orwell in January in which the agreement was to be between "The Big Two of Europe" and the USSR.

In the petition, Koestler sees the different ethical systems of East and West as the cause of the mutual tension and suspicion that now threatened a third World War "within the next few decades". Therefore, his aim was the abatement of suspicion, or what he termed "psychological disarmament", as opposed to "psychological armament" or "the extent to which a government obstructs the free exchange of information and ideas with the outside world". This of course is a restatement of the problem he had first identified in *The Yogi and the Commissar* essay of 1942: namely, the inability of the Yogi or Commissar to communicate - that is, to exchange information and ideas -with one another. The petition is thus Koestler's attempt to reconcile the Yogi and the Commissar by the mutual sharing of information and ideas.

It is also a practical exercise, rather than the academic essays with which he had been associated until now. Koestler calls for free access of British newspapers, books and films to the general public in the Soviet Union and *vice versa* - the latter is important, for one factor behind Russell's cooling enthusiasm in April and May 1946 is the suggestion that the document and the proposed League betrayed an anti-Soviet stance. Russell referred, in a letter of 13 May 1946, to differences in "important matters of principle and policy", stressing that, in his opinion, the term "psychological disarmament" should apply to all powers - something Russell maintained was not clear in the draft petition he had examined. Koestler did as much as he could to put this idea into practice: he and Orwell corresponded regularly over the next two years over the publication of illicit Ukrainian translations of *Animal Farm* and *Darkness at Noon* aimed at reaching Ukrainian "displaced

persons" in Germany (MS 2345/2).

"A country which builds a Maginot line of censorship from behind which it fires its propaganda is committing psychological aggression" he wrote in 'A Way to Fight Suspicion' (Koestler 1955: 22), but rather than retaliating with counter-propaganda, he wanted the Western governments to take the initiative and start the process of "psychological disarmament". Revolutionary ethics, as deployed by Gletkin and Ivanov, relied upon restricting the amount of information freely available to people like Rubashov. Perhaps Koestler reflected on this as he drafted the important paragraph (8) of the petition.

"I do not know whether this is a counter-revolutionary, Trotskyite, or Fascist suggestion; but I do know that if it were carried out, if the doors of the hothouse were opened to the sun and fresh air of the world's natural climate, the next war (which will mean the end of us all, including the people of Russia) could be avoided...Psychological disarmament would almost automatically lead to material disarmament...and make isolation the more superfluous. The present vicious circle would be reversed." (Koestler 1955: 23)

Note "the present vicious circle would be reversed". The choice of words may be coincidental, but *The Vicious Circle* was to have been the title of *Darkness at Noon* until Daphne Hardy quoted Milton (Levene 1985: 55). It might be reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the practical ethical exercise of the draft petition, which itself arose from Koestler's perception of the Yogi-Commissar ethical dichotomy, was intended as a reversal of revolutionary ethics.

The League for the Freedom and Dignity of Man

Koestler's reminiscence that the 1946 petition predated "by several decades Amnesty International and the Western approach to the Helsinki Agreement, but aiming in the same direction" (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 44) is a bold claim that, if supported by corroborative evidence, would support my thesis that Koestler had moved away from Commissar-ethics and towards an ethical synthesis that asserted the importance of the individual, as the Yogi in Koestler would wish, whilst dealing with the problems of democracy and good government that were the focus of the Commissar.

The question that might be raised, therefore, in the light of Koestler's own expressed intention to search for a synthesis between the Yogi and the Commissar, as outlined in the second *Yogi...* essay, is whether Koestler attempted such a synthesis himself or with others.

Crick's evaluation of the petition (Crick 1980: 345) suggests he did; but the petition itself is not incontrovertible evidence, nor is the *New York Times* article reprinted in *The Trail of the Dinosaur*. For "psychological disarmament" alone is hardly sufficient grounds for comparing Koestler's ideas with Amnesty International. The petition makes no reference to political prisoners nor does it provide any indication of "lobbying on behalf of political prisoners and against oppressive laws everywhere" (Crick 1980: 345), such factors apparently being the subject of a "memorandum" or "manifesto" alluded to, but unpublished, in Crick's study (Crick 1980: 450).

Fortunately, corroborative evidence does exist to back up Koestler's claim. The document in question, housed in the Orwell Archive, is a manifesto we can date to early January 1946, for a League for the Freedom and Dignity of Man and appears to be in Orwell's typing (OA15 20/1 - 20/2), forwarded to Koestler for further comment and amendments.

The document begins by setting down the context for such a League.

"During the past fifty years it has become apparent that the nineteenth century conception of liberty and democracy was insufficient. Without equality of opportunity and a reasonable degree of equality in income, democratic rights have little value." (OA15 20/1)

(This has all the hallmarks of Orwell's authorship: "equality of opportunity" and "equality in income" are Orwellian rather than Koestlerian themes).

It is important, therefore, that freedom of speech and the press, the right to political opposition and an absence of police terrorism are at the centre of true democracies. However, it is argued, many people in Britain are unaware of such rights. Hence

"the time has come to form a new organisation to do the work which such bodies as the League for The Rights Of Man were supposed to do and failed to do." (OA15 20/1)

The League was to have a two-fold task of theoretical clarification and practical action. The State needed to guarantee every citizen "equality

of chance" and protect him against economic exploitation or the limiting or misappropriation of his creative abilities with the minimum of interference.

It is under the heading "practical action" that the origins of Amnesty International can possibly be seen: the League was

"to make itself the advocate of infringements against the Rights and Dignity of Man, whether they occur in the British Empire or in Russian occupied territory." (OA15 20/2)

This would involve defending the individual

"against arbitrary arrest, imprisonment without trial, punishment under retrospective laws, arbitrary displacement or restriction of movement or of the right to nominate and vote for candidates of his own choice" (OA15 20/2)

To further its aims, a magazine would be issued, quarterly then monthly when the League had established itself, to assist the international co-ordination "between individuals and groups in various countries pursuing similar aims". Other organisations undoubtedly already existed - Orwell had in his possession the *déclaration* of the *Ligue Internationale Pour La Défense Des Libertés Humaines*, but in spite of the *Internationale* adjective such leagues were largely national or localised campaigns. Orwell lamented in the manifesto that there was no mutual contact at present. In practical terms, the emphasis on co-ordination between countries and the focus on infringements against individuals by means of imprisonment and torture undeniably predate the aims of Amnesty International.

It is, of course, important too to note that once more we see Koestler, by his enthusiasm for Orwell's manifesto, implicitly fighting for the defence of individuals and, therefore, championing the Yogi-ethic.

A practical synthesis of Yogi- and Commissar-ethics

Of course, it can be argued that Koestler was once again, in Carlet's terms, emulating his childhood hero, Baron Munchausen, by taking part in the action - "driven", as Orwell wrote in the manifesto "by the sense of urgency in the age of the atomic bomb" - to counter his growing feeling of helplessness; or, in Faulks' thesis, embracing the

idea of a League as part of the "man of action" mainstream of English literature, to which Koestler now clearly belonged.

But just as there is more to the League than a statement of practical intent, so it is reasonable to read into the League precisely the sort of synthesis between the concerns of the Commissar (the centrality of democracy and the need for socio-political ideals) and those of the Yogi (the need for individual freedom, particularly freedom of expression) that Koestler had seen as diametrically opposed ethical opposites in human history. Interestingly enough, perhaps with Koestler's recent essay in mind, Orwell had used the word synthesis in the manifesto itself.

"The programme for the Rights of Man has to be restated in the light of developments since the French Revolution...A *synthesis* has to be found between political freedom on the one hand and economic planning and control on the other." (my italics) (OA15 20/2)

In fact, the question of balance, or synthesising apparently opposite ethical opinions, had been aired by Orwell himself in his War Diaries, as for instance when he noted on 27 April 1942 that no-one was capable of "balanced judgment" or of seeing an opposite point of view - insensitivity that, he confided in his diary, made him despair (OA 7/4: 13). It says something of Koestler's synthesis argument that Orwell had seen its merits even whilst preoccupied by the practicalities of living in London during the Blitz.

My thesis that the League demonstrates a synthesis of the two types of ethical poles in Koestler's spectrum is given weight by Orwell's plea that whilst the League should be "tolerant of divergent opinion", it should be "uncompromising in its fight against any tendency to subordinate ethical values to opportunistic expediency" (OA15 20/2) - in other words, it must avoid the subjugation of means to ends that lay at the heart of Commissar-ethics whilst recognising the value of ethical stances other than the authors' (or, for that matter, the League's) own.

In other words, the League seeks to combine the individualist ethic of the Yogi with the society-orientated goals of the Commissar into an ethic that is not only a synthesis of the two approaches but higher than both. Bitter experience had suggested to both Orwell (from those

observations contained in his War Diaries) and Koestler (as someone who had been imprisoned without a proper trial) that such a synthesis was not only desirable but necessary if the pitfalls of Commissar-ethics were to be avoided in post-war Europe.

The Law of Detours in action

In the months following circulation of the League manifesto and Koestler's final editing of the petition, the petition (and possibly the manifesto, though there is no evidence for this) was circulated among Orwell, Gollancz, Russell and Koestler. In June, Gollancz was still enthusiastic, writing that he was "tremendously in favour of your [Koestler and Orwell's] new league for the Rights of Man...this should be pressed on with immediately" (MS 2345/1: 68). But Russell's collaboration, Koestler wrote, had been "meanwhile withdrawn" for the reasons stated above - although later Koestler was to dwell almost entirely upon the personal acrimony with which he viewed the matter in retrospect, and implicates Russell's wife as the prime factor in the project's demise (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 43-44).

In fact, the failure of the project sheds light on precisely those ethical laws that Koestler had set down in *The Gladiators*. The failure of the project was the failure of one man (Koestler) to communicate his ideas to the wider group, just as Spartacus had failed to do. Koestler perceived that group co-operation was a prerequisite if the project was to succeed, doubtless with the lessons of the failure of Spartacus' revolutionary ethics in mind. He wrote to Russell by return of post to a crucial letter in which Russell had laid out his misgivings over paragraph (8), emphasising in his reply, as he had done in *The Gladiators*, that it is the chorus and not solo voices that influence history (MS 2345/2: 87, 90). Russell's final letter on the subject was merely to suggest that Koestler sign the petition as an individual. This Koestler was not prepared to do.

Koestler appeared undeterred in the face of Russell's withdrawal of support. He was ready for compromise, telling his friend Manès Sperber that the petition was "meant as a very tentative draft" (MS 2374/1:

390) and urging Gollancz to make "any alterations you like: neither Orwell nor I have any copyright or vested interest in this matter" (MS 2345/1: 70). Almost inevitably, this acted as an invitation for lengthy discussions between Gollancz and Koestler over the exact wording of the petition. Koestler's enthusiasm wanes almost visibly with the passing of each letter and each minor correction or criticism. Koestler thus experiences the Law of Detours for himself; unable to press ahead regardless of criticism and personal rancour, he bent over backwards to retain the support of his friends and influential figures such as Russell even if Russell was hardly likely, from his philosophical background, to agree with Koestler's ethics¹⁶. By attempting to meet his critics halfway, as Spartacus had also done, and avoiding the dictum of the Law - to be ruthless for the sake of compassion - the project was doomed to failure.

Spartacus' failure had been a failure of communication and shared ideals, and perhaps ultimately this was the reason for the League's failure. Certainly, as far as the rift between Russell and Koestler is concerned, the tensions are barely disguised in the fictionalisation of the League in *The Call-Girls*.

Bruno Kaletski's opening remarks to the Schneedorf symposium mirror the pessimism of Russell at the proposal of the League, particularly Russell's belief that nuclear war was imminent. Indeed, the symposium itself in *The Call-Girls*, whilst outwardly modelled on Koestler's Alpbach gathering of 1968, has its genesis in the Snowdonia conference that Russell aimed at in 1946 but which never materialised.

Tyndall erroneously attributes the idea of the Conference to Orwell and Koestler (Tyndall 1992: 159-161). It is clear from Koestler's correspondence that the proposal for a Conference was Russell's idea. (Its failure was primarily attributed by Koestler to the withdrawal of support, organisational and financial, by its potential sponsors, Humphrey Slater and Rodney Phillips, on the grounds that their support of the League would compromise the purely theoretical nature of their

¹⁶Russell's espousal of identity theory - see Popper, in Popper and
 1977: 82-83 - would certainly make him disagree with Koestler's
 philosophical concept of the three orders of reality.

magazine, *Polemic*.) Nor is there any suggestion that the "proposed meeting in Wales would be a propaganda move" (Tyndall 1992: 160) when the petition echoes the neutral stance of the League's manifesto in asserting that the "arrested bloodstream of *the world*" - a typical Koestlerian physiological analogy - rather than any single country or bloc was Koestler's focus of attention. As Koestler wrote to Orwell on 9 January 1946

"He [Russell] thinks it is too late to start any sort of ethical movement, that war will be upon us soon, and that more directly political action is necessary to prevent it. He suggests that a conference should be called with no more than a dozen people who are all experts - one expert on the Far East, one on Science, Propaganda, etc., to work out a programme of action. He himself is ready to read a paper but not to act as a convener...I believe his idea for a Conference can be fitted into our plan and that the people at such a Conference would be in favour of initiating an organization on our lines." (MS 2345/2: 13)

Fiction it may be, but one recalls Soloviev's reflections on Bruno's refusal to sign the petition in *The Call-Girls*.

"'Bruno will talk and talk and sit on the fence. In the end he will say he cannot sign because he is a member of several official bodies...In matters of *Weltanschauung* we have no common language. I am not sure whether they care. They might regard caring as sentimental. But we had to have them to complete the spectrum and avoid giving the impression that we are biased.'" (Koestler 1972: 80)

It is possible to argue from the above that Koestler had been seeking a reconciliation of Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics in the proposed League and that the spectrum (or the hierarchy in *The Yogi and the Commissar II*) needed to be fully represented if the League, or even the petition, was to succeed. But just as the League demonstrates hierarchical ethics in action, so its early demise demonstrates the difficulties of applying such an ethic in practice, difficulties which, as stated above, hark back to the difficulties of communication faced by Spartacus. Koestler, in attempting a hierarchic ethic, was in a singular minority. He does not disguise his contempt of Russell's philosophy in Soloviev's summation of Bruno Kaletski and indeed all those who could not see beyond their own level of the hierarchy.

"'But though we hate each other's philosophical guts, emergencies create alliances. They may co-operate out of opportunism, to be on the band-waggon. Or they may not. Then at least we shall have

tried, and to hell with them.'" (Koestler 1972: 80)

Conclusion

If Koestler's frustration at the time is apparent from his later fictionalised account of the abortive League, it does at least demonstrate how much he had moved on from revolutionary ethics. It is also evidence that, in practical as much as theoretical terms, Koestler sought to bring together the Yogi and the Commissar. Radical action was required; Koestler shared Orwell's contempt of "catastrophic gradualism" as *Twilight Bar* makes clear, and this helps explain the urgency with which the League was proposed.

Quite simply, the League might well have come to fruition but for the lack of support at the last minute from Slater and Phillips and the intransigence of Russell; the continuing strength and worldwide influence of its true descendant, Amnesty, demonstrates only too well the power that is to be harnessed when Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics are combined to form a higher ethic that acknowledges the strengths of the two poles. Orwell continued to find the lack of any organisation that highlighted individual freedom and democratic rights a serious deficiency in post-war Britain. Exactly a year since the demise of the proposed League, Orwell still felt strongly about the need for such an organisation, as the recently discovered letter to Koestler shows:¹⁷

"the point is that the N.C.C.L. [National Council for Civil Liberties] became a Stalinist organisation, and since then there has been no organisation aiming chiefly at the defence of civil liberties." (MS2375/1: 249; incorrectly filed)

But the League's co-founder had moved on in other ways. Individual

¹⁷The letter I found from Orwell to Koestler, dated 21 March 1947 is listed in Orwell and Angus 1970b and the Orwell Archive where no copy of this letter existed. It is miscatalogued in the Koestler Archive. The contents reveal their importance to Orwellian scholars: Orwell's identification of "archists" as "moving spirits" in the Freedom Defence League and his assumption that the Freedom Defence League might yet become the organisation that Koestler had wished for twelve months earlier occupy much of the letter. The letter ends with an oblique reference to the continuation of the *Eighty-Four* on his return to Jura, the appalling winter of 1946-47 and Richard's progress. See Davison (ed.) 1997: 84, Item 3196A, for its new location in Orwell's collected writings.

guilt no longer concerned Koestler; he had begun to think of an inherent flaw in the human species, and analogies of such a medical diagnosis begin to emerge at precisely this point in Koestler's writing: the hints at the schizophysiology in *Twilight Bar*, the need in the petition to restore "the arrested bloodstream of the world" (paragraph 9) and Koestler's pessimism not based on individual or even government action but upon humanity at large.

Such a flaw required an almost theological solution, as Toulmin points out. The abortive League indicated to Koestler that practical action, even when based upon his own belief in hierarchical ethics, was futile. On only one more occasion would Koestler immerse himself in such a crusade, in his involvement in the anti-hanging campaign. The special reasons for this shall be discussed in Chapter 3.

Meanwhile, he and Polanyi set to work on a book that, according to Koestler at the time, would solve the problems he had encountered as a practical ethicist. This was eventually published as *Insight and Outlook*. As he wrote to a friend in December 1945,

"I have just finished...my Palestine novel, and am starting on a very fat book on psychology which solves all problems and will get the Nobel Prize (for Science). Misi [Polanyi] and I have become great friends and are going to save the world together. So for the next few months there is enough to do and I must close lest world-saving be delayed." (MS 2374/1: 196-197)

CHAPTER 3: THE HOLON

Introduction

In this chapter, I shall examine the culmination of Koestler's ethical theories: the concept of the holon set out in *Insight and Outlook*. The theory of *holism* was not in itself new, as Koestler acknowledged. It emerged in biological thinking as a theory, developed by Smuts (Smuts 1926) that whole entities, and above all living beings, have specific characteristics which differ from those of their individual parts. Koestler, taking his cue from disciplines such as Gestalt psychology, recognised that holistic thinking could be used to expand the notion of *hierarchy* he had put forward in *The Yogi...* essays. Members of a hierarchy, like the Roman god Janus, have two faces looking in opposite directions. "To talk of sub-wholes...is awkward and tedious" Koestler later wrote, and so he proposed

"to coin a new term to designate these nodes on the hierarchic tree which behave partly as wholes or wholly as parts, according to the way you look at them. The term I propose is 'holon', from the Greek *holos* = whole, with the suffix *on* which, as in *proton* or *neutron*, suggests a particle or part." (Koestler 1967)¹

I shall then describe the mechanism of bisociation which is at the centre of this crucial work, as the means by which individuals may move up the ethical hierarchy.

With the publication of *The Trail of the Dinosaur*, prefaced by the author's now-famous pronouncement that "Cassandra has gone hoarse", (Koestler 1955:viii) Koestler then began what scholars such as Hamilton or Crick see as a different, and scientific, phase of his life. Certainly, the "self-consciously big books" that followed (Crick 1989a: 65) appear to owe more to physiology than politics. But I shall attempt to demonstrate that Koestler's scientific ethics are remarkably similar to his earlier political ethics.

However, Koestler's bold claim that a second volume of *Insight and*

¹ I make no apology for using Koestler's later succinct definition of the holon for the sake of brevity and clarity! *The Ghost in the Machine* remains the most easily digestible summation of Koestler's arrival at the holon in 1967 (Koestler 1967: 45-58).

Outlook would appear shortly in which his system of ethics would be properly set down was not met. Yet again, one must look at an ethical novel - in this case, *The Age of Longing* - to see the implications of the holon for the twentieth century. Increasingly, Koestler felt that the integrative tendency of the human species was being thwarted by an inbuilt tendency towards self-destruction, which acts as a downward drive in man's slow advance up the ethical hierarchy. This is evident both in the non-fictional work of the 1950s and *The Age of Longing*, which highlights Koestler's dystopic vision of a species capable of acts of creativity yet prone to self-destruction. Nevertheless, I aim to show that the spiritual basis of Koestler's ethic remained intact during this turbulent period.

During this time, the novelist and philosopher remained also a practical ethicist. This is nowhere better demonstrated than the anti-hanging campaign, the importance of which can be viewed by the pre-eminence that Cynthia Koestler gave to this in the last volume of her husband's autobiography (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 186-207). I shall present evidence to suggest that even this apparently humanitarian campaign had a deeply spiritual and ethical side to it.

Thus, it is possible to discern a uniformity here, as elsewhere, to Koestler's work. With the central planks of his ethical system in place, if not spelt out, before he began the *Janus* trilogy of later years, apparently diverse themes as human creativity and the abolition of capital punishment may be seen as the outworking of an ethical system based upon a transcendent and spiritual view of humanity.

3.i. INSIGHT AND OUTLOOK

Polanyi's ethics

Koestler dedicated *The Yogi and the Commissar* to Michael Polanyi. Polanyi's reaction was typically gracious, writing to Koestler to say he was "moved and pleased by this act of friendship...we have much in common, in fact" (MS 23344/7:42). In the same letter (11 September

1945) Polanyi told Koestler that there were "a number of things" in his mind he hoped to share with Koestler, not least the idea of funding a journal "to explore the foundations of liberty". (Polanyi had not, of course, been privy to the correspondence between Orwell and Koestler of the same period so did not know that such a project had already been mooted.) Certainly, the "breakdown" (MS 2344/7: 66) of the 1946 Conference appears to have heralded a period of close collaboration between Polanyi and Koestler, resulting in the refinement of the ethical system of the second *Yogi*... essay into the scholarly work *Insight and Outlook* in which the concept of the holon was examined at some length.

The two men had begun to exchange ideas soon after the publication of Polanyi's *The Contempt of Freedom*. For Koestlerian scholars may be misled by the inscription of the presentation copy of *The Contempt of Freedom* in Koestler's own library² and conclude, wrongly, that Koestler read these essays only after his own *Yogi* essays were published. In fact, it was one of the first books that Private Koestler read in his time off from the 'Digging for Victory' campaign, less than six months after his release from Pentonville. The possibility of collaboration was indeed raised at the same time, in May 1941 (MS 2344/7: 2), by which time Koestler was aware of Polanyi's emerging concept of a hierarchy and his own discovery of the primacy of the creative act.

Given that Koestler had read *The Contempt of Freedom* four years prior to its author presenting him with an inscribed copy, one can speculate as to whether Polanyi's notion of the hierarchy facilitated Koestler's own model of the ethical spectrum. Also, there remains the possibility that the title of *Arrival and Departure* came to Koestler after his reading of *Truth and Propaganda*, in which Polanyi had concluded

"Unless intellectuals make a new departure, inspired by unflinching veracity, truth will remain powerless against propaganda." (Polanyi 1940:116)

The handling of similar themes within *Truth and Propaganda* and *Arrival*

²The book is inscribed "To Arthur - who so kindly tries to take me seriously. 4 Nov. 1945 Misi." [SC4326]

and *Departure* may be coincidental, even if Peter Slavek does fit the description of an intellectual with "unflinching veracity". Koestler's ethical novels at the very least reveal considerable common ground between Koestler and Polanyi.

However, once the two men began their lifelong friendship³ their research cannot be said to be independent. It is indeed easy to conclude, as Polanyi's widow did, that by failing to acknowledge his debt to Polanyi, Koestler was guilty of the serious charge of academic plagiarism.⁴

The creative act was taken up in *Science, Faith and Society*, the eponymous lectures that led to the creation of a new chair that Manchester granted, somewhat reluctantly, to Polanyi, in which he draws the reader's attention to the creative, or as he calls it, the intuitive act.

In the previous year, Koestler had argued that as a solution to the endless cycle of Yogi-Commissar ethics, individuals could be trained in various disciplines of meditation. It was a suggestion that was met with no small amount of academic scorn. Yet Polanyi was thinking along similar lines, for as Torrance has noted (Torrance 1980:138) *Gestalt* in Polanyi's view is equally amenable to the trained eye. Within one year of each other, Koestler and Polanyi were making the same point, calling for a rediscovery of 'intuition' or the creative act, Koestler from his background as a condemned prisoner and his dramatic perception of the reality of the Third Order, Polanyi from his background as a chemist and his encounter with Bukharin which had so alarmed him in 1935.

It was that idea of intuition that was pursued by both Koestler and Polanyi in their comparable ethical hierarchies. Both men were adept at

³Their closeness is best indicated by the extent of the Polanyi file in the Koestler Archive, which runs to 249 pages from 1941 to 1980: in other words, for all except the last three years of Koestler's life since he settled in England. (MS 2344)

⁴See, for example, Magda Polanyi to Arthur Koestler, 25 August 1980, after her husband's death (MS 2344/7: 249). "It would be time to repair your reputation, instead of PERSEVERING TO LIVE ON OTHER PEOPLE'S - mainly Michael's - ideas. Your 'Janus' has been mentioned to me as a blatant example."

using examples from the natural sciences to argue for the importance of intuition. Koestler returned to his childhood hero of Kepler to make this very point at great length in *The Sleepwalkers*. Scott (Scott 1985:38-39) illustrates Polanyi's argument with the example of Marie Curie, who had been attracted intuitively to Becquerel's work⁵ without being able to rationalise her fascination (which of course is a scientist's version of Peter's dilemma in *Arrival and Departure*).

Much later, and shortly before his mental health began to deteriorate, Michael Polanyi wrote to Koestler remarking upon the development of their respective hierarchical systems as a "partnership as outsiders in philosophy" (MS 2244/7:235). Polanyi traced this partnership back to the publication of *Insight and Outlook* in 1949. It need not surprise us that two men sharing a common background and a common hostility to Bukharin and totalitarian science should alight upon the same hierarchical system with which to counter Commissar-ethics.

Koestler's metatheory

"My new book is about psychology, ethics and the world 'uberhaupt'. My outlook is more pessimistic than ever, and an occasional bottle of Government-imported French wine is the only mitigating circumstance." (MS 2374/1: 415)

Insight and Outlook was Koestler's second full-length work of non-fiction, and thus represented a much more difficult challenge than the compilation of essays in *The Yogi....* His "enquiry into the common foundations of science, art and social ethics" - the subtitle of *Insight and Outlook* - would occupy Koestler for longer than any other project, before or since. He had first considered writing about a theory of humour in May 1943, even before the conclusion of *Arrival and Departure*; seven years were to pass before the theory was published, by

⁵This traditional interpretation of Marie Curie's intuition, which owes much to Irene Curie, has recently been challenged by Susan Quinn. She offers a more prosaic view of Marie Curie, suggesting Curie's research was a natural progression from that of Lord Kelvin (Quinn 1995: 143-154) whilst noting that Curie, with his belief in psychic phenomena, was the Koestlerian *sleepwalker* intuitive partner in the husband and wife team (Quinn 1995: 207-208).

which time it had become a "back door approach" to the much wider issue of creativity that had so occupied Koestler and Polanyi in the post-war years. Koestler, immodest as ever, referred to it as "a fascinating thing and [*Insight and Outlook*] should create a minor revolution" (MS 2374/2).

However, in another sense *Insight and Outlook* is a logical successor to the *Yogi...* essays, in which he had passionately argued for a synthesis between the saint and the revolutionary. Thus, Koestler took the concept of a hierarchical relationship a stage further, seeing the relationship not in terms of two separate entities but as part of a whole, or a single system.

"Because a hierarchy consists of a series of levels of organisation, there will exist throughout its structure a series of part-whole relationships, in which components at one level will be subordinate to the organisational level above, and supraordinate with respect to components of which they themselves are composed." (Webberley 1975: 12-13)

The word holon that Koestler invented to describe entities with such dual attributes was clearly too technical for many of his readers, and in his later work he tended to highlight his use of the Roman god Janus, who was said to have two faces facing opposite directions, to describe the system based on the holon. Ethics could therefore be subsumed into a general theory that sought to explain the behaviour of both organic systems and inorganic systems or societies. Webberley sees this as Koestler's most important contribution to philosophy: a synthesis of creativity and General Systems Theory that can, in Webberley's opinion, be treated as metatheory (Webberley 1975: 12). Indeed, Webberley goes as far as to say that *only* by invoking General Systems Theory⁶ can the relevance of his work be properly assessed (Webberley 1975: 16).

⁶Using Webberley's own definition, General Systems Theorists "take as their province both biological and electrical systems, linguistic and social systems and mathematical systems, indeed any pattern of organised activity in which the whole made by its components is richer in ways of behaving than what obtained by leaving the parts isolated... [They] seek to establish laws which apply to all systems, and far from regarding such laws as philosophical, they come in certain cases to view them as empirical." (Webberley 1975: 16-

Certainly, Koestler himself appeared to lay claim to such a broad application of his ideas in the preface to *Insight and Outlook*.

"The aim of this book is [to show]...that all the creative activities of man are based on a common pattern, and to present a unifying theory of humour, art and discovery...Secondly, the attempt is made to show the possibility of a system of ethics which is neither utilitarian nor dogmatic, but derived from the same integrative tendency in the evolutionary process to which the creative activities of art and discovery are traced."
(Koestler 1949b: vii)

Humour exists as a "comic clue to creative thought" (Koestler 1949b: 14) and was an appropriate starting-point in Koestler's quest for a metatheory of art, science and ethics. Indeed, his findings might be of interest only to the historian of psychology, but for the fact that this opening part of *Insight and Outlook* introduces the reader to central tenets of Koestlerian metatheory that apply as much to ethics (or so Koestler would assert) as they do to the humble music-hall joke.

Bisociation

The idea that behaviour and thought form patterns or coherent units can be traced back to William James' scheme of "streams of consciousness" and, later, Kohler's *Gestalt* theory. Koestler calls these phenomena "operative fields". For most of the time, such operative fields will function completely independently of one another, even within the same subject. Different rules apply to different operative fields. Koestler uses the example of a chess-player viewing the different pieces on a chess-board: the operative field of thinking by which he perceives the knight will differ from that with which he perceives the pawns or king. "Each operative field tends to facilitate its 'permitted' type of association and to inhibit all others" (Koestler 1949b: 41).

Bisociation occurs when two independent and self-contained logical chains intersect; the clash of two associative streams of thought being totally unpredictable. And humorous too: for Koestler proposed that the essence of the joke or comic routine is the bisociation of two operative fields in a junctional concept which is a member of both. As an example, Koestler used Bergson's example of the joke of the

Monagasque dignitary wearing 36 medals. Asked what heroic deeds he had carried out, he replied "Simple: I got a medal for my faithful service to the prince; I put it on a number at the roulette wheel and the number came up." (Koestler 1949b: 19f). Two independent and self-contained logical chains are operating in the mind of the listener. Firstly, the logic of the roulette wheel with its own set of rules: stake one unit on a single number and, if successful with the gamble, the return is 36 times the stake. Secondly, the logic of military awards also applies: this man must be a hero in order to boast 36. The junction is the concept "medal".

"Thus laughter rings the bell of man's departure from the rails of instinct. He has emancipated himself from the humourless laws of the biological urge, from the fanaticism of purposeful single-mindedness; he has become bisociatively double-minded. All animals are fanatics; man is able to see both faces of the medal at the same time...he can see the trivial aspects of his tragedy and the tragic absurdity of his routine." (Koestler 1949b: 70)

The important principle is that the sudden clash of two usually independent lines of reasoning sparks off a reaction that is entirely unpredictable and frequently creative.

The principle immediately takes us beyond a theory of humour to the ethical arena of Koestler's earlier novels. Rubashov and Slavek are "bisociatively double-minded": at least, they become so, at key moments in the action of the ethical novels. As an example, consider the critical moment at which, for Rubashov, the mathematical equation of the Party's logic was unbalanced: the sight of Bogrov being dragged away for execution. Two independent streams of thought run through Rubashov's mind. Firstly, what had they done to this naval hero to draw the childish whimpering that so terrified him in his cell? Secondly, he remembered that Arlova had been dragged away in a similar manner, her shoes rather than Bogrov's trailing along the corridor. The junctional concept was one of execution. The two previously unconnected streams of thought suddenly united in Rubashov's mind to convince him of the moral bankruptcy of the Party's mathematical ethic.

"The unimportant factor had grown to the immeasurable, the absolute; Bogrov's whining, the inhuman sound of the voice which had called out his name, the hollow beat of the drumming, filled his ears; they smothered the thin voice of reason, covered it as the surf covers the gurgling of the drowning." (Koestler 1940:

143)

The bisociation of these two hitherto unrelated streams of thought is undoubtedly a creative moment for Rubashov: it not only "smothered the thin voice of reason" but took him to that higher plane in the ethical hierarchy that made his own confession and sacrifice seem a perfectly appropriate action.

Bisociation is most graphically encountered in the unpublished *Arrival and Departure II*. As Peter Slavek studies Rachel, he observes her sandals and is reminded of his own childhood, "of the feeling of dry sand between his toes walking at the beach". At the same time Rachel's face brings to mind a more painful memory: of the "cursed Race" and the agony of the Mixed Transports. The two independent streams of thought clash.

"There must be something wrong with him, a split in the mind...But perhaps the split was in the world outside, between the two planes of reality, the one of howling and gnashing of teeth, the other imbued with gentle warmth and the smooth sand of the beach between one's toes. Two planes which never met, had no knowledge of each other. One walked over that safe, flat, sunny beach, suddenly a hole opened and the underworld swallowed one up - the Other reality, the realm of...the stifled, unheard scream."
(MS 2317/2)

"All animals are fanatics; man is able to see both faces of the medal at the same time": Rubashov could see both Bogrov and Arlova being led to their execution; Slavek could see both his own childhood and the torture of his race in Rachel's figure. Bisociation, with its concomitant element of unpredictability and surprise, transforms the human situation from one of mere pathos into a potentially life-enhancing moment, from which the subject emerges at a higher level in the ethical hierarchy.

Of course, Koestler knew this from his own prison experiences, with various recorded incidences of the "gallows humour" with which he saw his solitary confinement, noting numerous "trivial aspects of his tragedy" and the absurdity of his own routine. He had observed the same phenomenon in Richard Hillary, whose life and writings so eloquently explored the intersection of the tragic and trivial planes of human existence. Bisociation, indeed, is what makes the ethical novels so powerful - Rubashov examining the holes in his socks whilst almost

simultaneously reflecting upon his own imminent death, and so on. It can be no coincidence that in the ethical novels, and indeed in Orwell's revolutionary ethics novels, the revolutionaries are single-minded serious creations devoid of humour or imagination. Rubashov stresses the point in *Darkness at Noon*.

"The most conspicuous trait of the Neanderthal character was its absolute humourlessness or, more exactly, its lack of frivolity."
(Koestler 1940: 224)

The use of the word "Neanderthal" is thus deliberate, implying that Gletkin was less than human due to his single-mindedness to the cause and a total lack of bisociative thinking⁷.

Thus, if Koestler had declared in *The Yogi...* essays the need for a synthesis between two apparently opposite types of thinking - that of the Yogi and that of the Commissar - to solve the human predicament, here was an attempt to explain how such a synthesis might occur, at the junction of two independent streams of thought. However, all that Koestler had done at this stage was to explain the mechanism of creative thought-processes: which is not the same as devising a mechanism by which such syntheses of divergent thought patterns might be made to occur more frequently. In short, the process, however it is explained, remains haphazard.

Self-Assertion and Self-Transcendence

From a specific theory of humour, Koestler moves on to examine the implications of the evolutionary hierarchy that he postulated in 1945, which he sees as having a distinct biological foundation. Organisms have two opposing tendencies, which under conditions of stress come into conflict: self-assertive and self-transcending tendencies. Self-assertive emotions (including, in Koestler's scheme, laughter) serve as a downward pull as the organism strives to move up the hierarchical

⁷In Orwell's case, the "animals are fanatics" aphorism almost crossed divide between *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with the interrogator rien initially described as "pug-like of face" (Siegel f169^r) and "puggy" ice on Siegel f256^r) before these animalian adjectives were omitted by the -hor in the final text.

scale. Self-transcending emotions (such as crying, the theory of which Koestler sets out in Part Two) ultimately provide the organism with its social cohesion and provide upward impetus in the evolutionary hierarchy.

The logical outcome of this should, of course, be a perfectly integrated human society. Koestler, so often accused of pessimism, seems to hold on to a dream that sociology and biology "will appear as branches, or rather levels, of one discipline" (Koestler 1949b: 158) - and by implication, ethics too will be able to be subsumed into a totally integrated and continuous social science. It is quite clear, as Koestler himself admits, that this is not yet the case, because, in his terminology, human society is not a functionally mature whole.

The question that can reasonably be asked therefore is, why is human society so "unstable and transitional" that it militates against an integrated social ethic that Koestler had pleaded for since 1945? The answer is crucial in our understanding of Koestlerian ethics.

"The reason for this is that *Homo sapiens* lives in an environment which is changing through his own activities at a biologically unprecedented rate, that is, under paranormal⁸ conditions such as no other species has ever experienced." (Koestler 1949b: 158)

The rate of evolutionary change and its implications was to become a dominant theme in the *Janus* trilogy.

Although much of Part Two is of little interest to the ethicist, Koestler seeks to shed light on the kind of ethical conflict that had been the subject of his earlier novels, by explaining such conflicts as a manifestation of underlying conflicting loyalties. Such conflicting loyalties arise when the self-transcending and self-asserting tendencies clash. In cases where the integrative control over the different tendencies is weak - as is often the case when, for example, a complex social order has recently emerged that has not had the time to consolidate - the decision goes against the more recent, higher, integrated ethic.

⁸Koestler's use of the word "paranormal" is unfortunate and misleading it would later come to be associated, by Koestler and others, with *psi* phenomena. Although Rhine and Koestler had already corresponded by 1949, and Koestler was already interested in Rhine's findings, there is no suggestion that Koestler was using "paranormal" in the sense intended in much later work.

Though Koestler does not himself make allusions to his novels, one immediately thinks of the "Sun State" brought into being by Spartacus as an attempt to move the revolutionary slaves to a higher and more socially whole ethic. But the State has not had time to consolidate as a functional whole before the self-asserting tendencies of various racial factions come to the fore. The higher ethic that Spartacus had striven for would, in time, have shunned old methods such as crucifixion as a means of maintaining law and order; but precisely because of the fragility of the Sun State in its early days, decisions of law and order inevitably revert to the old system. A higher form of integration thus proves elusive.

There are clear undercurrents of Freudian terminology in Koestler's analysis of ethical conflict, as if the *id* and *ego* are the two conflicting forces at work, the *ego* representing the integrated and more stable functional unit that is the goal of the organism in Koestler's hierarchy. Certainly, in a rare acknowledgement of the value of Freudian metatheory, Koestler states that ethical conflicts are experimental neuroses on a higher level (Koestler 1949b: 189). But Koestler differs from Freud fundamentally in arguing that self-assertive and self-transcending behaviour are not polarised opposites. Most "conflicts" are therefore not conflicts at all but merely varying levels of stress in a stable society - Spartacus, Rubashov and Slavek are important because they find themselves in societies that are far from stable! Self-transcending tendencies should, under the right conditions, more than compensate for any self-asserting thoughts within society, *if that society is stable*.

"The 'ethical imperative' of a tree is to grow straight towards the light and to send its roots deep into the soil, while spacing the branches and leaves at proper intervals to exclude all mutual interference. But, then, a tree is a dynamic whole in a standardised environment, and human society is still remote from that state." (Koestler 1949b: 189)

Part of the problem, according to Koestler, is that the integrative tendency and its basis of a "natural system of ethics" (Koestler 1949b: 190) have been neglected in favour of what he described as "great ideological currents" of the last century, with an emphasis on biology and sociology. Interestingly, Koestler saw one of the emergent

disciplines of the post-War era - parapsychology, in the wake of Rhine's research - as evidence for the self-transcending tendency in the human organism.

Partly, this is simply a restatement of the argument Koestler had expressed more succinctly in the second *Yogi...* essay. The saint, or the yogi, epitomises the self-transcending tendency in each of us; the revolutionary, or Commissar, contrariwise stands for the self-asserting tendency. Yet it would appear, on close examination of *Insight and Outlook*, that not for the first time Koestler is leaning heavily towards the side of the yogi. Explicitly, he is certainly abandoning any hope of a rational ethic such as might be championed by the Commissar.

"A completely rational conduct in conformity with the present scientific outlook in general...must inevitably lead to nihilism. The place for a system of ethics in harmony with our state of knowledge is vacant." (Koestler 1949b: 231)

Indeed, Koestler refers to "three common fallacies: Rationalism, Optimism and Utilitarian Ethics" (Koestler 1949b: 228), thus dismissing the self-assertive tendency of the Commissar once and for all. New developments in science favoured the yogi or self-transcending tendency, that part of us that can perceive the Third Order as Koestler had done in Seville. But if this is familiar territory, what is new is that Koestler saw the self-transcending tendency as the means by which the different views of the staircase - mystic and scientist - may yet be reconciled and a "natural ethics" attained. In other words, the Yogi, unlike the Commissar, had an important part to play by contributing his more biologically useful self-transcending persona to the debate that Koestler now sought to initiate.

I suggest that the tendency towards self-transcendence is thus further evidence that Koestler's emerging system of ethics was implicitly spiritual and relied upon acceptance of the existence of his Third Order.

Coincidentally or not, Polanyi had also talked of the tension in science, but in Polanyi's language this was expressed in terms of a dichotomy between knowledge and faith. Faith, to Polanyi, had to become more important. Now Koestler was saying the same thing. Science could

no longer be ethically neutral. In Koestler's terms, the new emphasis on wholeness in various disciplines should already have indicated to the scientific community that the ethical neutrality of science was at an end. Once the tendency towards self-transcendence is recognised, Koestler assumed, the turning-point would be obvious. Having laid down the principles by which his natural ethics would be governed, Koestler conceded that further elaboration was necessary.

"But a detailed examination of the integrative tendency as a basis of a natural system of ethics must be postponed to Volume II." (Koestler 1949b: 190)

"Common foundations" questioned

Koestler had attempted to show the common foundations of all forms of creative energy by the existence of fundamental tendencies that exert themselves in human behaviour.

Reviewers were quick to point out that in this respect, Koestler was not entirely original, and that he owes a debt to Freud's life/death instinct. *Eros* is replaced by Koestler's integrative drive, *thanatos* by self-assertion. The key difference, of course, is that whereas Freud was concerned largely with pathology, Koestler's aim was avowedly success and health: if external pressures could not bring about a peaceful society (something that Koestler recognised with *Twilight Bar*), might there not be a biological mechanism already in place that could be utilised for the good of mankind?

Bremner argued that Koestler was looking for a social cohesion and wholeness that existed in primitive societies and was now lacking in modern society (Bremner 1949); but again, Freud had sought inspiration in primitive societies for the basis of his metatheory. Like Freud, Koestler distrusted traditional religion, so Bremner perceived Koestler as pinning his faith in the 'oceanic feeling' of mankind - self-transcending impulses which our more competitive modern society has allowed to atrophy.

The criticism that Koestler faced is also reminiscent of that faced by Freud, and for good reason: both had attempted to establish an ambitious metatheory on the basis of tendencies that could not

apparently be proven or disproved. Koestler had tried to bring forward empirical data to support his case, just as Freud had used his famous case-studies as the building blocks for his fully-fledged psychoanalytical metatheory. It is important to note, however, that unlike Freud's case-studies, no-one was disputing the interpretation of the biological data. Reviewers concurred that the biological sciences did indeed demonstrate the subservience of parts of an organism to an integrated whole (Anon., MS 2435/4: 2). The difficulty, and one that was to be used against Koestler many times, was that Koestler (some would argue, like Freud) did not know when to stop. The concept of integration, useful as it is in certain aspects of philosophy, becomes meaningless in the wider spheres to which Koestler would have it apply (Anon., MS 2435/4: 11). This overegging of the pudding inevitably led to a largely hostile reception, with the predictable exception of post-Freudians like J. A. C. Brown who is almost unique in finding *Insight and Outlook* "so readable" (Brown 1949)!⁹

But what of Koestler's specific system of ethics, implied in the book? For it could be argued that just because the concept of the integrative drive has been given undue universal significance, that does not validate its usefulness in ethics. *The New Statesman and Nation* also perceived Koestler's yogi-inclination in the new version of the 1945 hierarchy.

"There is some suggestion that they [bisociative pairings such as form and function] form a hierarchy with the field of the oceanic feeling, overlapping with Jung's archetypal experiences, at the top." (Anon., MS 2423/2)

It was also pointed out that, from Koestler of all people, there was the disconcerting suggestion of unthinking self-surrender by the individual to society as a prerequisite for society to achieve integration. Koestler, of course, would reply by saying that

⁹The other notable supporter of *Insight and Outlook* is Roy Webberley, it could be argued that his support of a General Systems Theory interpretation of Koestler (Webberley 1975) is made with the benefit of hindsight and for the express purpose of advancing a particular view of activity that accords with Webberley's own research. Webberley himself admits that von Bertalanffy, the "virtual founding father" of General Systems Theory (Webberley 1975: 16) only came to appreciate the significance of Koestler's work much later.

totalitarian states are *faulty* integrations; but that is mere tautology, and it is true to say that Koestler does not properly spell out precisely where the flaw in totalitarian states lies; after all, some new societies, including democratic ones, succeed in spite of the "self-asserting" pull towards old values. Why should totalitarian states themselves be flawed? Orwell had criticised the same Koestlerian generalisation after reading *Arrival and Departure*: all revolutions are failures but they are not the same failures.

Insight and Outlook - Volume Two

One of the first readers of *Insight and Outlook* was, not surprisingly, Michael Polanyi. For Koestler's *magnum opus* was the 'world-saving' joint project to which he had referred four years previously. Although Polanyi must have felt that Koestler's ideas were already outdated in the wake of his own research at Manchester with people like Turing, he was fulsome in his praise (MS 2344/7: 10).

But this was atypical of the reception given to Koestler's psychological volume. Thus, within a month of its publication, Koestler wrote to Polanyi informing him he had dropped all plans for a second volume and had started on a novel instead. He explained why in his letter to Polanyi of 20 June 1949.

"There are various reasons...One of them is that I wanted to discuss the matter with some people in Boston. Another reason is that I must get over the depressing effect of the reception of the first volume. I know cortically very well that jeers and sneers do not matter, but thalemically my indignation must die down first, otherwise I could not keep the second volume entirely free of polemical *aigreur*, and that would of course be fatal."
(MS 2344/7: 119)

He added that Polanyi should not misunderstand his change of plan; he had wanted to write a novel for a long time so the sequence of events suited him. "I hope the second volume will profit from the distance gained by postponement" he concluded (MS 2344/7: 119). In fact,

Koestler had already embarked upon the sequel before depression set in¹⁰. There are echoes here of the summer of 1944 and Koestler's abandonment of the sequel to *Arrival and Departure* in favour of *Twilight Bar*, also due to acute depression. In both instances the author left a legacy of an unpublished manuscript and little else, in favour of work that is generally considered sub-standard but which has important ethical implications.

Perhaps too Koestler was aware that Polanyi's research and the Gifford Lectures that Magda had told Koestler her husband was finally preparing (MS 2375/3: 111) suggested that further work required more open acknowledgement of Polanyi's contribution. Polanyi's letter of 4 August 1949 must surely have given Koestler food for thought.

"I should very much like to see you again and talk to you about the problems of *Insight and Outlook*, both as regards the content of the book and the problems connected with its authorship..." (my italics). (MS 2344/7: 120)

Polanyi's less than confident approach to a field of research that he and Turing were immersed in almost full-time (the so-called resonance theory of cortical functions) contrasts with Koestler's ambitious claims for his own work on the same subject. "Even today I feel very uncertain of my ground" Polanyi had noted; Koestler, meanwhile, continued to receive less than complimentary letters on *Insight and Outlook* and must have begun to consider there was merit in Polanyi's more reticent approach.

But among the most significant responses to his work, again indicative of the yogi-slant in *Insight and Outlook*, was the response of parapsychologist J. B. Rhine. For Rhine, Koestler's new initiative to seek a common foundation for ethics and science based on an integrative view of human society was "a great undertaking" to be admired. Rhine saw himself as "belong[ing] to a little group of men who are attempting to reach a broad integration of what men have found reliable in all fields"; reference to such work in Koestler's volume not only gave the new science of parapsychology credibility but

¹⁰The surviving manuscript of the sequel (MS 2372/2) can be confidently dated to 1947-48 by the Bwlch Ocyn typed address on the reverse of MS 2372/2:

suggested that both men were partners in the same quest (MS 2375/3: 102). This was to prove a strong influence in the reassertion of Koestler's reality of the Third Order in his later writings.

The notes that Koestler left do not reveal that Koestler had succeeded in synthesising the various trends of Volume One, as he had claimed he would in the Preface to the 1949 volume (Koestler 1949b: x). There is no written description of the natural system of ethics he had promised his readers, but the manuscript contains ample further scientific evidence, particularly in the field of developmental psychology, to back up its author's claims for the integrative tendency in humans. It was left to others, Polanyi included, to pursue the ethical-theological implications of holistic science. One such person was the American Clementine Simkins who had, like Koestler, worked on the theory of the holon since 1943. Simkins sought to develop Koestler's work along theological lines (she had submitted her work to Reinhold Niebuhr), and presumably it was this application of Koestler's holistic theory that made her reluctant simply to pass on the fruits of her labour to Koestler, with whom she eventually decided to share her research in 1949. Koestler did not appear to keep Simkins' notes, so that it is difficult to evaluate the merits of her case; nevertheless, her lengthy letter (MS 2375/4: 261) suggests that *Insight and Outlook* was already giving rise to new applications of Koestler's metatheory. One can speculate as to whether Simkins was one of the American correspondents (along with Clara Urquhart, who had pursued Koestler's ethical league for the freedom of man in America) referred to by Koestler in the letter to Polanyi of 20 June of that year, with whom Koestler wanted to discuss the possible sequel to *Insight and Outlook*.

But the enthusiasm of a few - Simkins, J. A. C. Brown, Polanyi - did not compensate for Koestler's opinion that people had not taken his work seriously. Coincidentally or not, Polanyi and now Simkins were making claims that challenged Koestler's originality. Koestler once again began to see himself as a novelist rather than an ethical philosopher "trying to do for philosophy what Einstein attempted for physics in his unitary (*sic*) field theory" (Lunn 1949). "My *raison d'être* on this earth" he confided to Polanyi in September is "to finish

two or three more books...If I succeed I shall wait with a clear conscience for the devil to take us all." (MS 2344/7: 122)

At the end of July 1949, Koestler confided to a close friend that a new novel was "well under way" (MS 2376/3: 101).

3.ii. THE AGE OF LONGING

The advent of "Neanderthal"

If Koestler had been considering writing a novel for some time, Cyril Connolly had unwittingly provided Koestler with the inspiration for its setting. Connolly had written a graphic description of his experience in Paris on Bastille Day 1945 in an editorial in *Horizon* (Connolly 1945a).

"I spent the 14th of July wandering about the... city rejoicing with accordions and fireworks... and trying to decide what was missing." (Connolly 1945a: 152)

Perhaps Koestler had already toyed with the idea of using this scene as the opening of a new novel; certainly, Connolly's perception of an atmosphere of foreboding and his description of American youth feature prominently in *The Age of Longing*. However, Connolly's editorial piece might not have been taken up by his friend had events in Europe not provided Koestler with an urgent theme. As Koestler wrote later of *The Age of Longing*

"Soviet Russia had turned with dramatic brusqueness from an ally into an enemy. The Cold War was at its peak. So was Stalin's reign of terror...It was impossible to foresee against whom he would strike out next, and with what fantastic charges...It was the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the period in which it was written." (Koestler 1970: ix)

So Connolly's essay on post-war Paris and Cold War realities come together in a novel which marks Koestler's return to the historical writings that had proved so successful in the early 1940s.

But there are two significant influences that suggest *The Age of Longing* deserves consideration as an *ethical* work. The obvious influence, from Koestler's comment above, is the impact of Orwell's dystopic vision of post-war Europe - remembering that, until just

before publication, Orwell was ready to allow his American publishers to publish the book under the title *The Last Man in Europe* (Shelden 1991: 469). There are striking similarities between *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Age of Longing* that indicate the impact of Orwell's work upon Koestler, and these shall be discussed below.

Secondly, unlike the period during which Koestler had first alerted Western readers to the horrors of Stalinism in *Darkness at Noon*, by now Koestler had made his claim for the historical dichotomy between yogi-ethics and commissar-ethics, and, with *Insight and Outlook*, had attempted to give a scientific foundation for his hierarchical ethics. One might expect a more developed ethical theory to exist in *The Age of Longing* than in the earlier novels, and for the characters to behave according to the different types of ethical model that Koestler had postulated. Indeed, even Koestler's opponents had countered with Koestlerian terminology: Merleau-Ponty had published a series of articles under the title *Le Yogi et le Prolétaire* and these articles, with their implication that Stalin's purges were a historical necessity - the very argument that Gletkin had used against Rubashov over a decade ago! - were a major influence behind the writing of *The Age of Longing* (Koestler 1970: x).

The book begins on "Bastille Day, 195-". As its author explains in a short prefatory note, it is not intended as a visionary tale of the distant future, but "merely carries the present one step further in time - to the middle nineteen-fifties" (Koestler 1951: 8). And immediately, in the sentiments of the character Monsieur Anatole, the novel carries Koestler's fears for Europe one stage further, with his anxieties of an impending nuclear war expressed at the outset.

"'So it has started,' he said. 'The overture to the next world war. It always starts with little incidents like this...'"
(Koestler 1951: 12)

Anatole believes that this Bastille Day may be the last before the advent of "Neanderthal" (Koestler 1951: 23) - the word first used by Rubashov to express in a derisory manner the Stalinist revolutionaries that now threatened France - thus placing the action of what follows in the context of Koestler's hierarchical ethical system. The "little incident" to which Anatole refers is the accidental knock that brings

together the novel's two main characters, Hydie, an American lapsed Catholic, and Fedya Nikitin, an attache of the "Commonwealth of Freedomloving People", Koestler's satirical reference to the Soviet Union with hints of his earlier Utopian society set in the future in *Twilight Bar* (see Koestler 1951: 17 for an explanation of the usage of the term).

The discussions that make up most of the novel, whilst perhaps they are the cause of the novel's uneven literary quality, take place in an unambiguously spiritual context, as is evident in the final scene at Monsieur Anatole's funeral.

"For the place of God had become vacant, and there was a draught blowing through the world like an empty flat before the new tenants had arrived." (Koestler 1951: 447)

This has clear undertones of Cyril Connolly's famous final editorial in *Horizon* with which Koestler would be familiar.

"It is closing time in the gardens of the West and from now on the artist will be judged only by the resonance of his solitude or the quality of his despair." (Connolly 1949: 362)

One only has to listen to the voice of the Russian, Count Boris, to realise how despairing Koestler was.

"'Another year, or another five years at the most, and there will be no Europe left, nothing. Click' - he made an ugly noise with his tongue...-'Click' - finished.'" (Koestler 1951: 31)

Certainly the "resonance of his solitude" and "quality of his despair" both apply to Hydie and Fedya, but for different ethical reasons.

Fedya, who in the novel is linked by acquaintance to Gletkin, thus creating an association in the reader's mind with Koestler's greatest ethical work, resembles the old Koestler, content with Commissar-ethics and the ideals of the Party. That the chapters on Fedya's upbringing are generally regarded as the most accomplished in the book is not surprising, given the author's use of semi-autobiographical material. (Koestler was reliving his Communist past as he wrote this; he had abandoned the first volume of autobiography for the story of Fedya and Hydie.) Thus, from Fedya's affair with Nadeshda - a character who shares the same name as a girl with whom Koestler had had a brief but significant affair - to Fedya's arrival in Paris, the Commissar character is marked out from his fellows by his commitment to the

ethics of the Party and solitude in the gathering of Koestler's characters, each chosen to bring to the discussion a particular ethical viewpoint.

Hydie, however, remains a more enigmatic character. There can be little doubt that she is intended to represent the American ideal in the novel, a typically Koestlerian opposite to Fedya Nikitin's Commissar. The *lapsed* Catholic idea may have stemmed from Sonia Brownwell, Orwell's second wife and a close friend of Koestler. Sonia had been educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Roehampton, but such was her "morbid, repressed upbringing" she rejected Catholicism as soon as she left school, apparently in later life displaying a habit of spitting on the pavement whenever she saw a nun (Shelden 1991: 443). It would be easy to argue that Hydie, therefore, represents the kind of intellectual that Koestler believed that twentieth-century religion had failed, both fictionally and in real life, and that ethically and spiritually, Hydie personified Koestler's current predicament: the ex-Communist still searching for a creed to satisfy both his yogi-inclination and his Commissar's zeal for social reform.

Certainly, Hydie is used by Koestler as a vehicle for further reflection on the Yogi-Commissar dilemma. But, upon close examination, it becomes apparent that Koestler is hedging his bets in a way that he did not do with, say, the character of Peter Slavek. Hydie may have lost her faith, but she still has great spiritual insight and finds it difficult to reject her Christian upbringing. As she confesses to Fedya

"'You see, I could not imagine the world without God just as I couldn't imagine myself as just tissue without heart and a mind, and *maybe I can't even today.*'" (my italics) (Koestler 1951: 159)

It is also interesting to note that yet again in a Koestler novel, the central character is ridden by childhood guilt - in Hydie's case, the guilt of being helpless as a child at a friend's death. Hydie's "confession" arguably parallels the guilt that Sonia Brownwell felt, well into adult life, at her own apparent blame for the drowning of a childhood companion in a swimming adventure in Lake Neuchatel in 1936 -

though whether Koestler, or even Orwell, was aware of this is a moot point (see Shelden 1991: 445-447). Certainly, the whole episode of Hydie's "confession" is reminiscent of the guilt that Peter Slavek

professed to Sonia Bolgar for the responsibility of his brother's death, also during childhood.

Koestler's spiritual longing

Throughout the novel, Hydie continues to reflect Koestler's spiritual longing: "LET ME BELIEVE IN SOMETHING" Koestler has her plead in upper-case letters (Koestler 1951: 46). The inference that her convent education had failed her, her acknowledgement that, as she says to Julien, "I am one of the dispossessed" (Koestler 1951: 41), her analysis of the crystallisation of her faith into dogma, all point to apparent deficiencies in Yogi-ethics in Koestler's first extensive fictional analysis of the Yogi. (Note that had he continued with the sequel to *Arrival and Departure*, he had intended to introduce the character of "Cyril" to explore the same ideas he was now doing through Hydie.) Does Hydie therefore represent Koestler's final abandonment of Yogi-ethics as Peter Slavek's "departure" had done for Commissar-ethics?

The answer lies in the mystical passages of the book, which I shall argue are evidence of the influence of the reality of The Third Order, implicit in Koestler's sympathetic handling of the character of Hydie, and in the undertone - even the title - of the book itself. Hydie's education hinged upon the Convent's rejection of her mystical experiences. Through the Sister Boutillot-Hydie dialogues, Koestler makes clear that it is dogmatic religion rather than mysticism *per se* that he shunned. Hydie's faith changes from a personal and mystical belief in the efficacy of love into the dogma of received Roman Catholic teaching. It is, in many ways, the reverse process that Peter Slavek underwent in *Arrival and Departure*. But Hydie discovered (predictably for anyone who had read *Insight and Outlook*) that there were occasions when bisociative thought patterns would cause her to challenge accepted reason.

"If some experience nevertheless succeeded in penetrating these protective zones of her mind, she was upset for days. Quite innocent-looking causes would unexpectedly release a minor crisis, like a passage from Donne...which, for reasons unknown but dimly and desperately guessed, threw her into a violent

crying fit." (Koestler 1951: 71)

Gradually, Hydrie's mystic tendencies - the yogi part of her - are diminished by the nuns' teaching and discipline. The motive for such an education is tellingly revealed in the alternative terms the author had used for the Yogi-Commissar ethic in his earlier essays. "She [Hydrie] would make a rotten saint...What we need are crusaders, not saints" says the Mother Superior (Koestler 1951: 73). Koestler had asserted that post-war Europe needed neither, but a synthesis of the two. But whereas it served the purpose of the novel for Hydrie's education to appear as a parable of the secularisation of modern Europe, the mystical side of Hydrie is never far below the surface. Koestler may wish us to see Hydrie as "representative of American womanhood" (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 77) and, as such, a worldly-wise figure who has questioned received dogma. But there are frequent hints that such a "conversion" may be as fragile as Peter Slavek's, during the "grace had been withdrawn" prose passage at the beginning of the unpublished sequel to *Arrival*.

"Hydrie was happy as never before or after in her life. Only rarely, as if by a sudden eruption of a black sun spot, was the radiance of her mind marred by an unexpected stab of panic, the short turbulent fear that it was all too good to be true, and that one day she would be relegated back into the outer darkness where the parched souls writhed in the agony of their thirst." (Koestler 1951: 73)

In other words, the nuns could no more remove the mystical side that alone explained Hydrie's *genuine* happiness in the past than Sonia Bolgar could remove the self-sacrificial and equally irrational side of Peter Slavek's behaviour.

It is almost as if Koestler uses the novel to engage in a battle within himself to exorcise his yogi-tendencies, a battle he ultimately loses. Thus, Fedya, resembling Koestler the Marxist, becomes entangled with Hydrie, the would-be Yogi, in a doomed love affair during which both partners try to convert the other to their way of thinking. Other, minor, characters are thin disguises for various philosophers with whom Koestler had crossed swords and much has been made, rightly or wrongly, of this *roman à clef* as Koestler later called it (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 77). Yet few, if any, critics have alighted upon the central

tussle between the Yogi and the Commissar, as it is played out between Hydrie and Fedya.

It is possible to interpret Hydrie's behaviour as the fictionalisation of Koestler 'the man of action' struggling to come to terms with his Yogi leanings. After an important conversation with the counter-revolutionary Commanche, towards the end of the novel, Hydrie aligns herself with Commanche and Delattre - "'We are of the same generation, and we both belong to the type of talkative men of action'" (Koestler 1951: 392). Perhaps it is Koestler speaking here. But even if this is not the case, Fedya's analysis of Hydrie (Koestler 1951: 342-343) is almost a replay of Sonia's psychological probing of Peter in *Arrival and Departure*. There is a similar gulf between the irrational Hydrie, who will never be able to explain her behaviour *in terms that Fedya can understand* (the two occupying different planes on Koestler's ethical hierarchy), and the Commissar *par excellence*, Fedya.

The climax of the Hydrie-Fedya/Yogi-Commissar confrontation comes when Hydrie, like Slavek, discovers the value of "the ritual sacrifice", her "departure" no less dramatic than that of Slavek. There is even a hint that the earlier "departure" was still in Koestler's mind as he wrote this part of the novel.

"When she came to think of it, her deed already appeared to her modelled on so many examples, and dictated by such elementary common sense, that there was really no reason to get excited about it." (Koestler 1951: 397)

The "departure" or deed referred to is Hydrie's attempt to kill Fedya by shooting him with a revolver. The murder attempt is unsuccessful. For those wishing to psychoanalyse Koestler, here is an incident loaded with Freudian meaning - Koestler the would-be Yogi seeking to dispose irrevocably of his Commissar past but not succeeding; the novelist who had once again demonstrated he "could not write an infra-red novel without an ultra-violet ending" (Koestler 1945a: 13).

Ethics in a religious vacuum

With Hydrie's "departure" accomplished, insofar as it liberated her from her bond with Commissar-ethics, the novel returns to the central

theme of the *Yogi* essays, namely the difficulty of formulating a system of ethics in a religious vacuum.

The placing of the action in Paris, and the opening scene on Bastille Day, becomes significant as Commanche becomes a mouthpiece for Koestler's ethical dilemma, a dilemma that had evidently not been assuaged in the 1946 *League* or in the biological foundations of hierarchial ethics of *Insight and Outlook*.

"'Now the source of all political libido is faith, and its object is the New Jerusalem, the kingdom of Heaven, the Lost Paradise, Utopia, what have you. Therefore each time a god dies there is trouble in history...The last time a god died was on July 14th, 1789, the day when the Bastille was stormed...the People have been deprived of their only asset: the knowledge, or the illusion, whichever you like, of having an immortal soul. Their faith is dead, their kingdom is dead, only the longing remains.'" (Koestler 1951: 392)

The characters in the novel then reassemble for the funeral of Monsieur Anatole, the personification of the old Europe with those values and ethical ideals whose death Koestler evidently mourned. Anatole's death takes on tragic proportions, because the old Europe to Koestler epitomised continuity with past traditions. Anatole locates the importance of tradition in Koestler's *Weltanschauung* early in the novel.

"'Continuity means to be conscious of the past but as the past, not as the present or future. To imitate the past and to abolish the past are equal sins against life.'" (Koestler 1951: 21)

Anatole's death removes consciousness of the past from the minds of those seeking to establish their own systems upon present-day Europe. But without Anatole's knowledge, the mourners, "those who were still alive and free", were "all sick with longing". They sought spiritual ideals but they now lacked both Anatole's certainties and even his experiences.

"There was Monsieur Dupremont...longing for a penance which nobody could inflict on him; there was Hercules the Atom-Smasher, longing for a universe whose laws were the same for stars and men, and were open to the mind's understanding...There was St. Hilaire, who believed that man's only answer to destiny was the gesture for gesture's sake, and Commanche, preparing to die with a flourish but not knowing what he was dying for." (Koestler 1951: 447)

Again, it is Hydrie who may come close to reflecting the agony that

Koestler felt.

"If she could only go back to the infinite comfort...of a well-ordered hierarchy which promised punishment and reward, and furnished the world with justice and meaning...But she was under the curse of reason, which rejected whatever might quench her thirst without abolishing the gnawing of the urge; which rejected the answer without abolishing the question." (Koestler 1951: 447)

Thus, although the novel falls short of the literary standard achieved by Koestler in the ethical trilogy, arguably it remains the defining statement of Koestler's own ethical position. The ethical hierarchy that he had mapped out in the *Yogi...* essays was inadequate at fulfilling the spiritual longings of a generation in the "death of god" post-Darwinian era. Koestler, with his scientific background, was indeed under "the curse of reason" but the spiritual urge, the question of finding a solution to the timeless Yogi-Commissar *impasse* remained.

The frustration that Koestler the ethicist must have felt was undoubtedly heightened by the Cold War tension of the period. When he had written the apocalyptic ending to *Twilight Bar*, victory over Germany was inevitable and the Allies had yet to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima. Six years later, atomic war appeared a plausible scenario in the not-too-distant future. The final sentence of the novel reflects this tension whilst maintaining the deliberate ambiguity of *Twilight Bar*.

"The siren wailed, but nobody was sure: it could have meant the Last Judgment, or just another air-raid exercise." (Koestler 1951: 448)

Levene's critique

Koestler's contempt for the spiritual emptiness of Europe is perceived by Levene (Levene 1985: 112-126) as the central theme of the novel. Whilst he is one of several critics who rightly point to the Koestler's lack of "intellectual vigour and literary control" (Levene 1985: 112), Levene makes a valuable contribution to Koestlerian scholarship by linking Koestler's past political concerns with his future overtly scientific writing through *The Age of Longing*.

Levene's evidence for this link is in Koestler's description of the characters' "pathology of faith", specifically the "misfitted brain"

discourse of Julien. Here is the first concrete evidence in writing of the neurological schizophrenia - the Koestler-MacLean "schizophysiology" theory of *The Ghost In The Machine* - that dominated Koestler's later writing. In fact, we now know that Koestler maintained that there was a fundamental flaw in human evolution long before the work of Paul MacLean came to his attention. In his "This I Believe" notes for an interview with Ed Morrow on American radio shortly after *The Age of Longing* was published, Koestler responds to the programme editor Raymond Swing's request for "a statement of beliefs" with his view that *Homo sapiens* was a biological freak, "the result of a mistake in the evolutionary process" (Figure 2). Koestler's thesis suggests that at around this time he had begun to consider that a fundamental evolutionary mechanism was at work which militated against the very hierarchical ethic and utopian goal that had eluded his individual characters in the ethical novels or his fictional society in *Twilight Bar*. In his notes for the radio broadcast of 1954, he stated

"man's native equipment contains some grave fault in the wiring diagram of his most precious and delicate instrument - his central nervous system - which impairs the species' chance of long-term survival or even predisposes it to self-destruction."
(MS 2342/2)

In *The Age of Longing*, such a flaw is initially identified with God as Hydie, through her experience of seeing a child dying of cerebral meningitis, concludes that "God suffered from some malignant form of insanity" (Koestler 1951: 159). But, as Levene points out, it is in Julien's diagnosis of the clinical insanity of Europe in which Koestler moves his ethical thinking forward. Compare Koestler's "This I Believe" notes with Julien's thesis:

"'Has it ever occurred to you that when poets talk about the madness of homo sapiens they are making not a poetical but a medical statement?... A neurologist told me the other day that in all probability the snag lies somewhere in the connections between the forebrain and the interbrain. To be precise, our species suffers from endemic schizophrenia - that characteristic mixture of ingenuity and imbecility which you could observe in Boris...Our misfitted brain leads us to a dance on a permanent witches' sabbath. If you are an optimist, you are free to believe that some day some biological mutation will cure the race. But it seems infinitely more probable that we shall go the way of the dinosaur...'" (Koestler 1951: 365)

Levene reminds us that in part this refers to an earlier essay, "Anatomy of a Myth", published in *The Yogi...* anthology, in which he had stated that "the human mind is basically schizophrenic" (Koestler 1945a: 121), divided into two mutually exclusive planes. But whilst previously, such a theory was merely used to explore the nature of Commissar-ethics ("Anatomy of a Myth" concerned the Soviet "experiment" and the failure, in Koestler's eyes, of Commissar-ethics) and to accentuate the differences between mutually exclusive planes of the ethical hierarchy, now the theory begins to eclipse his view of a possible synthesis of Yogi-ethics and Commissar-ethics. In this sense, *The Age of Longing* is indeed the vital link between the ethical novels and the *Janus* trilogy and helps the reader understand Koestler's later pessimism.

Thus, whilst many saw the novel as an essentially futile exercise concluding in failure (a criticism that would be aimed at *The Call-Girls*, Koestler's next novel thirty years later), I believe that the failure in itself is highly significant. Just as the failure of Koestler's utopian republic in *Twilight Bar* marked Koestler's dismissal of a Benthamite solution to the predicament of man, so *The Age of Longing* is, in the light of Koestler's scientific notes of the period, a more finished analysis of the inadequacy of current ethical systems than is generally supposed. For what Koestler was now suggesting was that ethicists had to recognise the fundamental flaw in evolution that weighted the dice in favour of nuclear war; such a flaw was as important, if not more so, than the bisociative thought patterns that provided the human brain with its uniquely creative capabilities.

"*The Age of Longing* is a bleak song of disease written in the meagre hope that the truth he has seen will cure the blind, in the need at least to keep faith with himself." (Levene 1985: 132)

But Levene writes with the benefit of hindsight; what must be stressed is that Koestler's readers in 1951 had only Julien's self-opinionated theories and a few hints in "Anatomy of a Myth" aimed primarily at the Soviet Union to give clues for the reasons behind Koestler's growing pessimism. Such sparse offerings hardly amount to "the truth".

Levene is on safer ground when he notes that Koestler's identification with his new thesis, and determination finally to lay

the ghost of Gletkin's logical successor, Fedya Nikitin, is the cause of the novel's poor literary merit. Julien comments that "When a writer becomes a preacher, he is finished" - yet Koestler now lays himself open to this very charge, apparently out of choice.

"Koestler's choice was to relinquish contemplation and objectivity, to erode the boundaries between the political essay and political novel, and with full awareness of the artistic consequences, to preach sermons on the need for unshakable, unquestioning belief." (Levene 1985: 114)

Note also the manner in which Koestler equates "original sin" with the "evolutionary flaw" argument. One wonders if perhaps Levene has been taken in by the powerful arguments of the characters Koestler portrays, for no-one could possibly equate Fedya's Commissar-ethics with Koestler's current philosophy. The point is that it is "unshakable, unquestioning belief" that Koestler exposes as shallow, here as in the earlier ethical novels, but with the added sense of urgency in the threat of nuclear war.

Of course, it is almost inevitable that, as Levene concludes, Fedya emerges as the most rounded and fulfilled character, given Koestler's own Fedya-like past. It is equally inevitable that the structure of the novel resembles his earlier novels at several key points - Fedya's experiments on Hydrie's body (an act of literary plagiarism on Koestler's part¹¹) point to Sonia's treatment of Peter; the opening and closing symmetry evident in the "signs in the sky" mirroring the symmetry of *Arrival and Departure*; and (although Levene does not acknowledge this) Leontiev's submissive acceptance of his punishment redolent of Rubashov's final acquiescence of his sentence. But it is dogma rather than faith *per se* that is the primary target for Koestler now. Peter's "departure", confirming the moral rectitude of Rubashov's "confession", had demonstrated that faith was still a valid option in contemporary Europe.

Indeed, Levene acknowledges that Koestler attempted to establish an ongoing debate about the nature of faith between Julien and Hydrie in the novel (Levene 1985: 124). But Hydrie's assertion of "man's

¹¹ Nikitin's sexual trick on Hydrie is a literary device first found in and Wilson's *Hecate Country* (Davies 1951).

THIS I BELIEVE

I believe it to be highly probable that homo sapiens is a biological freak, the result of a spectacular mistake in the evolutionary process. The archetypal doctrine of original sin, variants of which occur independently in the mythologies of diverse cultures could be a reflection of man's intuitive hunch that somewhere along the line of his ascent to prominence something has gone fatally wrong.

Biological evolution is a proverbially wasteful, fumbling process, so there is nothing particularly strange or improbable in the assumption that man's native equipment, though superior to that of any known animal species, nevertheless contains some grave fault in the wiring diagram of his most precious and delicate instrument - his central nervous system - which impairs the species' chances of long-term survival and predisposes it to self-destruction. [Unconsciously we are still steeped in the Hegelian doctrine that we are living in the best of all imaginable worlds (for if a better one were imaginable, God would have created it); and so we keep marvelling at the wisdom of nature which produced rats which carry fleas which spread the Bubonic Plague, as an elegant means to maintain the ecological balance. The hummingbird hums in the trees accompanied by the creaking of the antelope's ribs in the python's embrace, and one wonders whether

Figure 2. Koestler's unpublished notes for the interview with Ed Morrow, 1954, revealing Koestler's credal assertion that *Homo sapiens* was a biological freak, at a far earlier date than Koestlerian scholars have so far assumed.

Note also the manner in which Koestler equates "original sin" with the "evolutionary flaw" hypothesis.

compulsive need to transcend himself" is more than the simple dogma Levene supposes (Levene 1985: 124). I believe it reaffirms the influence of the reality of the Third Order in Koestler's work. Hydie's loss of faith equates in the novel with her loss of self-transcendence, and this, more than anything in the novel, points to the empty "longing" that typifies the various characters' feelings at Anatole's funeral. Might it not be the pathology of dogma that is at stake here rather than Levene's "pathology of faith"?

"Love in the Afternoon"

There is, arguably, more direct evidence still of Koestler's continued belief in "the reality of the Third Order" in *The Age of Longing*.

I would suggest that the most telling piece of evidence for transcendent reality, curiously neglected by Levene and others, is that at its heart, this novel is a love story. In this respect, as in the author's frequent allusions to his upbringing, the novel resembles Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which as Sheldon has reminded us also contains a love story at its centre (Sheldon 1991: 472).

The similarities between the two works deserve study, for the Fedya-Hydie affair, like that of Winston and Julia, breaks the oppressive gloom and philosophical debate. Whether Koestler intended such similarities is debatable; nevertheless, the chapter "Love in the Afternoon" has all the seediness and subterfuge of the lovers' rendezvous that Orwell described in the "shabby little room above Mr Charrington's shop" (Orwell 1949: 112) in his final dystopic vision. Fedya perceives No. 1's successor in terms that would have done Big Brother proud: "it had been necessary to move warily and to watch one's step with extreme care" (Koestler 1951: 271). And both Fedya and Hydie come to speak of the oppressive regime of no. 1. in precisely the words used by Winston and Julia: "The Party".

If we then apply Sheldon's analysis of the central love theme of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to *The Age of Longing*, then the passion generated in the love affair of the two central characters can be interpreted as

a means by which not only can they enjoy a sense of freedom in an overwhelmingly stifling society but preserve - indeed, heighten - the humanity they had been in danger of losing: Hydrie from her indoctrination at the convent, Fedya from The Party's control.

"If the Party can kill the sex instinct, it can strengthen its control over everyone, but Winston and Julia show that destroying such a powerful urge is impossible, and that the mere expression of that urge can be a valid form of protest against Big Brother. It is a reaffirmation of life in the face of Big Brother's attempt to eliminate all signs of a vital existence among his subjects." (Shelden 1991: 472)

Koestler's "No. 1" is of course a near-historical embodiment of Orwell's Big Brother; the aims of The Party in both novels are inevitably similar, as the ethical development of their authors had followed such parallel paths. After all, Orwell and Koestler were both concerned, at the time of writing their respective novels, that Stalin might gain power in Europe. Orwell chose to focus on what might happen in the years following such an event; Koestler chose to highlight the means by which Stalin might gain power - by deploying nuclear weapons - if Europe failed to heed the warning. But both writers also knew that the power of individual love was the ultimate means by which "The Party" might be thwarted. "Love in the Afternoon" is, I believe, a fictional description of Koestler's response to Commissar-ethics: the Commissar symbolised by the severing of the umbilical cord between self and the world. The action of Hydrie and Fedya can legitimately be interpreted as an attempt, that ultimately failed (or so it would seem), to re-establish the connection. For as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the lovers in Koestler's novel view the world with a heightened sense of perception of the world about them.

In the case of Fedya, this was the second such attempt, for by reference to his previous affair with Nadeshda he recalled that "he could no longer reassemble the fragment of that *grammatical fiction* which went by her name" (Koestler 1951: 137, my italics).

Of course, it is possible to see the change in the characters' perception of the world in purely pragmatic terms without recourse to spiritual development (or any vocabulary that invokes in the reader the sense of the existence of a spiritual world). Yet such is Koestler's

frequent use of overtly religious, let alone, spiritual language that he is almost asking the reader to view Hydie and Fedya's passion as an experience that puts them once again in touch with a world that they had (in Koestler's terms) lost. Thus the transcendent reality - "Third Order" reality that affirmed the existence of a spiritual world - had been evident through Fedya's love before; "the grammatical fiction" from *Darkness at Noon* is used in a much more personal and sensual manner in this novel, related directly to human love. Koestler, now perchance in what he would later call the happiest period of his life (following the arrival of the South African Cynthia Jefferies as his secretary at *Verte Rive*), has become aware that it is not only hours spent by a prison window that put one in touch with a higher reality.

So there may be a sense in which there are really two revolutions threatened in the action of the novel: the potential political upheaval in Western Europe in the face of Stalinist Russia, and the spiritual revolution that many of the characters discuss in abstract terms but which Fedya and Hydie secretly enjoy in their love affair.

Evidence of "The Third Order"

The lovers' experience of a higher reality than The Party can ever admit to is emphasised by the elements of mystery that pervade the novel - which, I believe, are as deliberate as those Orwell placed in the Newspeak-dominated Oceania.

Thus, the central love scene in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is preceded by "the red-armed woman" hanging up her washing and singing, "her voice floated upward with the sweet summer air, very tuneful, charged with a sort of happy melancholy" (Orwell 1949: 116); in Koestler's novel, the pivotal "Love in the Afternoon" chapter is preceded by a woman humming an old song "Talk to me of love, Tell me tender things" as Vardi and Julien discuss politics. Vardi notes that "we have become embittered and venomous like old maids" and then "like feeling all of a sudden young again" (Winston's sentiments exactly) as Vardi talks of the new possibilities after the revolution. The old woman's singing interrupts his thoughts with the song again.

"To judge by the voice she must have been an elderly, wispy-haired charwoman, probably engaged in sweeping the dust and the cigarette stumps from the threadbare carpet down under the cupboard, where they could not be seen, only smelled." (Koestler 1951: 261)

This could be interpreted as Koestler's attempt to point to the "proles" as holding the key to the future of humanity; if so, it would be highly uncharacteristic as I have argued above that Koestler, unlike Orwell, believed that no single class of people possessed the answer to the predicament that Europe faced. It is, in my view, more likely that such a graphic and accomplished piece of prose interrupts the narrative of political intrigue to remind the reader that there is a subtext of mystery that no humanist system or philosophy can grasp.

In fact, at one point in Koestler's novel, the word "mystery" becomes part of the actual text. It is another little incident, one that occurs whilst Hydrie and Julien are debating the finality of death, that again reminds the reader of the presence of an order of reality not readily amenable to ethical systems or political ideals.

"Twilight was descending into the narrow street; in one or two windows of the little hotel opposite the lights had gone on and vague shadows moved across the Venetian blinds. A woman in the street called: *"Marcel! Marcel! Tu as oublié ta bicyclette"*; and the fact that Marcel had walked off forgetting that he had a bicycle seemed one of those poetic minor mysteries one meets in life which will never be solved. A vague idea drifted through Hydrie's mind that one should pay more attention to this kind of mystery: perhaps they held out some clue." (Koestler 1951: 172)

Julien, apparently oblivious to the incident, continues to expound upon the "deification of society" in typical Koestlerian terminology. The only hope, he suggests, is the emergence of a new transcendental faith "which would re-establish direct transactions between man and the universe" (a restatement of the arguments of the *Yogi... essays*: compare the phrase "the Man-Universe connection has to be re-established" in Koestler 1945a: 15 to Julien's theory).

But the irony is that at the very moment that Julien is speaking, clues of the existence of transcendental reality (i.e. Koestler's Third Order) were a stone's throw away.

"The same voice as before called out, invisible under a doorway. *'Marcel! Marcel! Tu as encore oublié ta bicyclette.'* The mystery deepened, and so did the shadows of the evening." (Koestler 1951:

174)¹²

My thesis is that the song of the charwoman and the incident concerning "Marcel" serve the same purpose as the coral paperweight and the 'Oranges and Lemons' verse in Orwell's final work, namely that they are there to lift the reader's vision from the mundane and the temporal to a "mystery" that cannot be explained¹³. In his previous works, such non-utilitarian behaviour had always been equated with certain individual actions of Koestler's fictional heroes: Rubashov's confession, Peter's departure, and so on. But now a higher reality is observed independently of the main protagonists, indicating that, in Koestler's work, a humanist explanation is insufficient. *The Age of Longing* points to Koestler's increasing awareness that his ethical system hinged upon human perception of the objective existence of a Third Order of reality.

For Orwell, who had said in 1943 that Koestler had yet to accept that death was final, the non-utilitarian world he conjures up through such literary devices as Winston's dream of the bluebell wood, the Golden Country and the nostalgia of antique shops is, in Shelden's words, a reminder of the price which will have to be paid if his dystopic vision

¹²Even supposing that Koestler's use of the name Marcel in a novel full thinly-disguised references to living French philosophers is purely incidental (Gabriel Marcel being the foremost proponent of a 'theology of mystery' or affirmation of transcendence), it is unlikely that Koestler's emphasis on this trivial yet deepening "mystery" at precisely the point that alien wishes for a transcendent faith is included purely for dramatic effect.

¹³In support of my argument, I would draw the reader's attention to the description of the coral paperweight (Orwell 1954: 120): "The inexhaustibly interesting thing was not the fragment of the coral but the interior of the mass itself. There was such a depth to it, and yet it was almost as transparent as air...The paperweight was the room he was in, and the coral was a's life and his own, fixed in a sort of eternity at the heart of the crystal." Significantly, Winston's arrest is marked by the crushing of the paperweight, and Winston's observation of "how small it always was!" (Orwell : 177). Whilst cautioning any scholar to adopt anything other than a humanist evaluation of Orwell's work, Orwell's awareness of eternity is also deepening with his expressed wish for a Church of England burial service and finally points to a non-utilitarian philosophy in certain aspects of his life.

becomes real. Sheldon refers to this as the "sensibility" of existence (Shelden 1991: 447).

"There must be a place in the modern world for things which have no power associated with them, things which are not meant to advance someone's cause, nor to make someone's fortune, nor to assert someone's will over someone else. There must be room, in other words, for paperweights and fishing rods and leather hammers used as children's toys. And there must be time for wandering among old churchyards and making the perfect cup of tea and balancing caterpillars on a stick and falling in love. All these things are derided as sentimental and trivial by intellectuals who have no time for them, but they are the things which form the real texture of a life." (Shelden 1991: 477-478)

I would suggest that the difference between Orwell and Koestler is that Orwell probably equated this world with pre-war England (and with his own upbringing, much of which is used in Winston's nostalgic dreams); Orwell was essentially saying to his readers that such a heritage - the rich language, bluebell woods, time for falling in love and so on - would be lost in the future if Big Brother was allowed to succeed. Koestler, on the other hand, offered a more overtly spiritual message and one that looks forward rather than back. He is realistic enough to know that his own experiences of a transcendent reality in the Spanish jail are unique. He asks the reader to look into the future for the proper recognition of transcendence that is glimpsed by Hydie on several occasions.

Hence, in this writer's opinion, the "longing" so acutely felt by the characters at Anatole's funeral is not the failure that is, say, Winston's at the conclusion of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Koestler, by offering the reader genuine glimpses of a higher plane of reality that exists independently of the characters in the novel, is not only maintaining but advancing his own ethical argument for a synthesis of Yogi- and Commissar-ethics.

The spiritual revolution betrayed

"The revolution betrayed" thesis, to borrow Orwell's phrase, has now become a more focused thesis in Koestler's writing concerning "the spiritual revolution betrayed". Again, there are striking similarities between the two writers. For if the two novels are at their heart love

affairs, then it is equally true that the two love affairs result in betrayal. The passionate bonds uniting Hydie with Fedya and Winston with Julia are irrevocably broken, with Winston begging O'Brien to turn the rats upon Julia and Hydie shooting Fedya. Of course, in Orwell's Oceania, it is inevitable that The Party will win control over Winston's mind. But the inevitability is equally applicable to the inhabitants of Koestler's "Paris 195-", given that none of the individual characters, or indeed European society according to Koestler, has yet identified the means by which the "broken connection" between Man and The Universe can be remade.

In fact, the betrayal of the revolution that had once been the joint concern of both authors to instigate also stemmed from the preoccupations of the two writers at the time. Orwell was still extremely worried that Stalinism might be victorious throughout Europe - hence *The Last Man In Europe* as the eponymous title for Winston's revolution, the title which he abandoned only in the final stages of writing; hence too his apparent willingness whilst in Cranham to write overtly anti-Stalinist propaganda. The more evocative the world of the Golden Country, bluebell woods, 'Oranges and Lemons' and beautiful paperweights with no utilitarian purpose, the greater the contrast with Newspeak and Big Brother. Orwell's spiritual revolution had to fail.

Similarly, Koestler was now concentrating more and more upon what would later become the "schizophysiology" thesis (Koestler 1967: 267-296). In the novel, it is largely through the character of Leontiev that Koestler's almost obsessive interest in neurophysiology and psychobiology is seen. Real-life findings from the biological sciences would feature of course in *The Call-Girls* - but by then, Koestler would be well-known for the *Janus* trilogy. Here, such findings are used to give credence to the lack of spiritual insight of the main characters. Hydie was, in a sense, fighting not simply her emotions but what Koestler memorably calls "fatigue of the synapses" (Koestler 1951: 182).

"The beauty of playing about with the synapses is that we have discovered methods whereby we can make a man believe that he has really killed his Mandarin and confess with earnest conviction... and killed him in such-and-such a way with the help of X, Y and

Z, who were his accomplices." (Koestler 1951: 184)¹⁴

Koestler was using scientific data to imply that the actions of his characters were subject to physiological explanation. Leontiev at one point proposes that biological strife may be manifest in political struggle (Koestler 1951: 212), further reducing the likelihood of would-be revolutionaries such as Hydie finding the new faith or transcendent reality that they were seeking.

My argument, therefore, is that it is not the religious allusions that are significant as Levene suggests, but the scientific data that pervade the novel. Not only do they set the scene for Koestler's later work, but they provide the reason for the lack of spiritual revolution and the atmosphere of unfulfilled longing at the novel's ending. In short, given that Koestler had become convinced of the "misfitted brain" hypothesis - central to his "What I Believe" unpublished credal statement - then it is as essential for Koestler's later work that the longing is unfulfilled as it was for Orwell that Winston and Julia did not live happily ever after.

For Koestler, the conclusion was clear: the perception of the higher (Third) order of reality is wholly absent from post-war Europe. But the glimpses of that reality, when combined with the knowledge we now have of Koestler's already well-advanced thesis of schizophysiology, lead this writer to conclude that *The Age of Longing* reveals its author's even firmer belief in both the existence and importance of the Third Order.

3.iv. KOESTLER'S DYSTOPIA

Utopia as evidence of The Third Order

In Chapter 1, we noted that *The Gladiators* marked the apparent end of

¹⁴Is this also an example of plagiarism that angered Magda Polanyi? This y seems remarkably similar to one Polanyi used in the Gifford Lectures anyi 1956: 289-290), the notes for which Koestler would have seen before ing *The Age of Longing*.

Koestler's belief in a communist Utopia. Goldstein has argued, however, that the whole of Koestler's life can be interpreted as the search for a new Utopia as a substitute for "the god that failed" in Stalinist Russia. But she notes that on each occasion, Koestler was disappointed.

"Reality in *The Promised Land* was very different from Koestler's expectations. The precise lack of the utopic, universal and romantic aspects turned it into a severe disappointment." (Author's italics) (Goldstein 1992: 6)

Goldstein is not the first to note Koestler's endless searching for a perfect society. Orwell, in his essay "Arthur Koestler", had also proposed that "the dream of a just society which seems to haunt the human imagination ineradicably and in all ages" was the motivation behind his friend's writings (Orwell and Angus 1970a: 274). Of course, it is possible to argue that Utopias are useful in highlighting the deficiencies of existing ethical systems. But Goldstein chooses to stress the appeal of Utopias to what I have called the *yogi* part of Koestler's nature.

"Paradoxically, Koestler's initial rationalism as a man of science, led him to place his rational expectations in Utopias. What followed was an infatuation with the irrational aspect of Utopias. It satisfied both the rational desire for a better life and his irrational craving for the absolute." (Goldstein 1992: 7)

If we apply Koestler's own terminology to Goldstein's analysis, the picture that emerges is of Koestler the Commissar attempting to put down the ethics of his perfect human society to satisfy his Commissar's instinct for a Benthamite goal - the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people - whilst at the same time satisfying Koestler the Yogi's need for a greater perception of the spiritual reality of the Third Order in society.

Koestler himself acknowledges, at least partly, his search for a Utopia in *The God That Failed*. His years in the Communist Party were the most obvious manifestation of this search - the true communist and classless society was to be a revival of the primitive communism of the early Prophets and Christianity. Utopia itself was merely a human projection of this archetypal communism, according to Koestler.

"Thus all true faith involves a revolt against the believer's social environment, and the projection into the future of an ideal derived from the remote past. All Utopias are fed from the sources of mythology; the social engineer's blueprints are merely

revised editions of the ancient text." (Koestler 1950: 25)

Given that Utopia represented a model for the synthesis of Commissar- and Yogi-ethics, it is not surprising that many of Koestler's novels reflect this fascination. But it is important not to lose sight, in the ethical framework of his fictional Utopias, of what Goldstein has correctly identified as the irrationality of Koestler's Utopias: for they are all, to one degree or another, marked by an individualistic, or in *The Age of Longing* social, perception of spiritual reality. However, such a perception - like Koestler's "discovery" of the Third Order in Seville - is not readily amenable to rational explanation.

Koestler's fictional dystopias

However, Goldstein's analysis does not differentiate between Utopias and anti-Utopias or dystopias¹⁵. In this classification, only *Twilight Bar* (and then only briefly) can be described as strictly utopian. Spartacus' Sun State would have been utopian, but of course the Law of Detours ensures it never materialises. Kumar indeed refers only to one of Koestler's novels as evidence of either Utopia or dystopia, and that is *Darkness at Noon* (Kumar 1987: 122, Kumar 1991: 62). Kumar perceives in *Darkness...* the imprint of "the single most important text for the genre", namely the Dostoyevskan scene in the dungeon between Christ and the Grand Inquisitor, refashioned by Koestler as the Gletkin/Rubashov hearings and by Orwell in O'Brien's interrogation of Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Kumar 1987: 122).

Kumar's argument for the plethora of anti-Utopias of the present century (he argues that no great Utopia has been written that has commanded readers' attention in the manner of Morris or Wells at the turn of the century) has given man's utopian dreams fresh impetus: anti-Utopias make one long for Utopia. In terms of my own thesis, it could therefore be argued that the lack of spiritual insight that was so evident in Stalinist Russia itself sowed the seed in Koestler's mind

¹⁵Dystopia is the word preferred by Turner to describe the opposite of —as More's ideal world, after the publication of Joseph Hall's *Mundus Alter dem* in 1600. (Turner 1965: 18)

for his spiritual encounter in Seville Prison and the later emphasis on Third Order-influenced ethics. Certainly, Koestler does use No. 1's dystopic society as an example of the mathematical logic that Rubashov comes to despise after the emergence of the Grammatical Fiction.

Kumar's line of reasoning is evident in Davies' enthusiastic adoption of *The Age of Longing* as a Christian text. ("Had I the power to do it, I would make it compulsory reading for every Anglican priest, from the archbishops to the latest recruit to the Diaconate.") For if dystopias exist as a means to further the cause of their ethical opposite, so Davies sees the "gospel of futility" in Koestler's work as the best possible advocate of the Christian gospel of faith (Davies 1951). The more Koestler focuses upon people devoid of spiritual values, the more one sees the need for spirituality. In short, the description of dystopia is a statement of faith in itself.

It is easy to read into the text a Christian context that was not intended by the writer. Certainly, the use of dystopia to promote faith and warn against the lack of spirituality in society was an innovation for which Kumar gives due recognition to Orwell (and by implication Koestler). For they created this new literary technique to make people conscious of what was happening "outside their own small circle" to quote Orwell (Kumar 1987: 344). That Stalin's communism was a false Utopia was still debatable; nevertheless, for Orwell and Koestler the best means of arguing against the false Utopia was by the creation of an anti-Utopia: "the need for heaven [countered] by the fear of hell" (Kumar 1987: 344).

Is Koestler's dystopia therefore simply a means of responding to Stalinism? That might be the case if, as Kumar infers, Koestler uses the literary technique solely in a Stalinist context. But he does not. After the completion of the ethical trilogy, *Twilight Bar* examines the utopian dream in a wider context and begins Koestler's examination of the problems surrounding a hierarchical ethic, and the particular problem of the inbuilt human flaw that, in *Twilight Bar*, means that enforced happiness simply cannot be maintained.

The Age of Longing also features Koestler's dystopia and although the Stalinist context reappears, with the various references to No. 1,

Gletkin and the Grammatical Fiction of *Darkness...*, Koestler's main argument now is to highlight the "misfitted brain" hypothesis as the reason for dystopic societies. By doing so he makes way for a spiritual interpretation such as that of Davies, in which the credal "Now I believe" statement of human misery (Koestler 1951: 176) becomes an invitation for true belief.

The sense of longing that emerges from the novel's conclusion and the ambiguous ending, like that in *Twilight Bar*, is due precisely to the rational desire for Utopia and the human evolutionary flaw that Koestler perceives prevents Utopia becoming reality. For Koestler it is important for his readers to be able to identify with both the dream and its failure in their own lives; hence the setting of the novel in "Paris, 195-". As Kateb has observed

"Whereas the classic Utopia stands in a sort of never-never land, out of time and space, the anti-utopian novel of recent years has been brought closer and closer to us...to reflect the sense of impending doom in the writer." (Kateb 1971: 82)

Kateb places *The Age of Longing* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* into this category. Thus it is possible to see *The Age of Longing* and, to a lesser extent, its natural successor in terms of philosophical dialogue and technique *The Call-Girls*, as evidence of Koestler's continued emphasis on dystopias as a means of highlighting man's spiritual longing. What began with Koestler's examination of the failure of specific Utopias becomes a more general analysis of the reasons for such failure based on the "evolutionary flaw" hypothesis. If such a flaw inevitably leads to the failure of man to fulfil his utopian dreams, it is scarcely surprising that dystopias become a major feature of Koestler's post-war writing, based not on a vague feeling of "impending doom" as Kateb suggests but upon the difficulties man continues to face in moving up the ethical hierarchy.

The Trail of the Dinosaur

In 1955 Koestler's post-war pessimism appears to have been partly vindicated, even if one of the possible scenarios at the end of *The Age of Longing*, nuclear war, had not come about. Koestler published a

collection of essays that he saw as a sequel to *The Yogi and the Commissar*, an examination of which will highlight the refinements that Koestler had made to his ethical theory indicated above.

"The essays, lectures and broadcast talks in this book date from 1946 to 1955 and are a sequel to a previous collection, *The Yogi and the Commissar*, completed in 1944. At that time the Western world lived in the euphoria of approaching victory, and the pessimistic forecasts of that volume were almost unanimously rejected as fantasies of a morbid imagination. In the ten years that have passed...all its pessimistic and seemingly absurd predictions have come true, but none of its optimistic and seemingly plausible ones - few and cautious though the latter were." (Koestler 1955: vii)

Koestler argues in the new anthology that man must shift the focus of his eyes to more vital questions than mere political ones: if Commissar-ethics had failed to provide a new Utopia, and the evolutionary flaw was the reason for such failures, then it seemed appropriate for Koestler to focus upon the flaw rather than upon Utopia. The famous "Cassandra has gone hoarse, and is due for a vocational change" statement at the beginning of the new anthology, entitled *The Trail of the Dinosaur*, is not as melodramatic as it sounds. Koestler's dystopias made such a shift in emphasis inevitable, and no doubt he hoped that if he solved the problem of the evolutionary flaw then hierarchical ethics might be a more realistic ethical system for post-war Europe.

That Koestler is less concerned with Stalinism and more with the failures of society in general is evident in "The Challenge of Our Time", an essay that reprints the opening talk of a BBC Broadcast series first made in the spring of 1947.

Although at first sight a restatement of the first *Yogi...* essay, using the metaphor of Captain Scott's return journey from the South Pole as a symbol of the "eternal predicament of man", Commissar-ethics is now broadened to include Western democracy. For Scott had two possible roads, faced with the sick Evans slowing down the march back: the road of morality (the Means determining the End in Koestler's language) or the road of expediency "where the traveller is guided by the principle that the End justifies the Means". Koestler's point is that if you start by throwing the Evanses of society to the wolves,

then the sacrifice of other weaker members becomes more acceptable. "Thus, the logic of expediency leads to the atomic disintegration of morality, a kind of radioactive decay of all values" (Koestler 1955: 12) - a phenomenon not restricted to Stalinism.

Koestler was, by 1947, beginning to see the archetypal Scott dilemma not so much in terms of political conflict but played out in the choices faced in the everyday world, with the consequences of man's actions amplified by the technological age in which he now lives. He admits he has no "final solution" and stresses in the essay that "well-meaning ethical movements" are flawed - an oblique reference, perhaps, to the failure of his own plans for the League for the Freedom and Dignity of Man. There are hints of Koestler's respect for man's mystical nature in the essay's conclusion: ethics must be freed from its utilitarian claims, with distant political goals not allowed to eclipse the importance of human values.

The importance of faith as a human value is seen in one of Koestler's most inspired essays, his science-fiction account of post-atomic war Russia written in 1951 - in other words, written just after *The Age of Longing*. In "The Shadow of a Tree", the weakness of Commissar-ethics is equated with the strength of religious faith of the Russian people in what has turned out to be a remarkably accurate picture of *glasnost* and the end of Communism.

"When in the early years of the Revolution the priests vanished from the Russian scene, religion did not vanish with them; it remained alive in the people. But when the Communists vanished from the scene Communism vanished with them because as a faith it had never existed among the Russian people." (Koestler 1955: 158)

Commissar-ethics was, for the first time, explicitly bound to the First or Second Order, that is the inability of a society or person to see beyond the perceptual or conceptual planes of reality.

The anthology also gave a fresh airing to Koestler's obituary tribute to Orwell, first printed in *The Observer* in January 1950. "A Rebel's Progress: To George Orwell's Death" confirms the thesis that the distinction between Orwell and Koestler was the former's distrust of a spiritual ethic.

"Orwell never became a fellow-traveller and never believed in Moses the Raven's Sugarcandy Mountain - either in heaven, or on

earth". (Koestler 1955: 104)

It is a dangerous simplification for Koestler to make of the writer of a complex work like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Indeed it has been argued that the character of O'Brien is evidence of Orwell's irrational and quasi-mystical nature (Deutscher 1963: 203). But as Kumar points out, given that Orwell's essays on James Burnham contradicted O'Brien's position, it is much more likely that it is O'Brien, not Orwell, who has succumbed to the "mysticism of cruelty" (Kumar 1987: 340). Sandison has added weight to Koestler's diagnosis by suggesting that the despair of Orwell's dystopia was a direct outcome of his sense of isolation and the spiritual bankruptcy of Protestantism (Sandison 1974: 6)¹⁶.

Certainly if we accept Koestler's conclusion that Commissar-ethics was bound to exclude any perception of the Third Order of reality, the difference between the two writers becomes almost inevitable. "Orwell never completely lost faith in the knobbly-faced yahoos with their bad teeth", Koestler wrote (Koestler 1955: 105) - in other words, if Utopia was to be brought about, the proles would be its founders. Of course, Orwellian scholars might well debate Koestler's analysis; nevertheless, readers of *The Trail of the Dinosaur* could well conclude that Orwell's work contained, lurking beneath the surface, Commissar-ethics in one form or another, whilst for Koestler the moral bankruptcy of such a system had been exposed in the ethical trilogy of novels. To the extent that revolutionary ethics had failed to take into account the existence of a Koestlerian higher reality, Koestler would come to quite the opposite conclusion to Orwell: for Koestler, all revolutions are the same failures.

The concluding essay of *The Trail...* was, as in its 1945 predecessor, written especially for the volume. Koestler resorts to familiar tactics - the use of scientific analogy and mathematical charts - to spell out

¹⁶As Crick points out, it is dangerous to infer from, say, the religious olism in the catechism scene in O'Brien's apartment, that "the whole book .hus about the state replacing God, and Orwell's agonized despair at -eving in neither" (Crick 1989b: 151). Crick is more circumspect than -tler on Orwell's "living without a belief in God", choosing instead to -light Orwell's perception of the collapse of morality and dislike of -olicism.

in graphic terms his own understanding of the ethical dilemma. He asks the reader to visualise "temperature charts" plotting the destructive potential of man's power and to compare the exponential curve thus represented with another chart, "on which we plot the progress of the species Man in moral philosophy, in cosmic awareness and spiritual clarity" (Koestler 1955: 232). This latter curve is now in steep decline, he argues, although the spiritual void is less obvious than the accumulation of power. Koestler sums up the dilemma in mythical terms

"The Promethean myth seems to be coming true with a horrible twist: the giant reaching out to steal the lightning from the gods is morally insane." (Koestler 1955: 234)

Herein lies the truth of Koestler's much-vaunted pessimism: it is not so much personal pessimism but the pessimism of the human race.

"And yet, by gaining time, by prolonging this *misery of existence*, mankind may yet hope for a reprieve." (my italics) (Koestler 1955: 241)

He then returns to the old Koestlerian theme of destiny from above superseded by destiny from below. The function of prayer - defined by Koestler as the influencing of fate - has become the prerogative of the scientific laboratory. Religion is thus sealed off from contact with logical reasoning. Although the pendulum has begun to swing back, Koestler maintains that the Church still demands "from all of us who shiver in the darkness precisely that kind of intellectual suicide and surrender of the critical faculties" (Koestler 1955: 247). Yet he continues to seek what he hopes will be a spontaneous emergence of a new kind of faith which satisfies man's spiritual craving without asking him to "split his brain into halves".

Koestler admits this sounds vague and irrelevant. Indeed, it is surely asking too much of ESP research or space age technology to provide the means by which man may move that step higher in the ethical hierarchy, by revealing the spiritual reality hitherto restricted to individual flashes of insight and crises infiltrated by the Grammatical Fiction. It is also important to note that Koestler by no means returns to "the same spiral pattern" of utopian dreams followed by disillusionment that Goldstein claims to find in Koestler's work (Goldstein 1992: 8). The conclusion of the whole volume indicates that

whilst Koestler's spirituality is still intact, his search for Utopia is finally over - the "misfitted brain" hypothesis had seen to that, and this hypothesis would now feature prominently in virtually all of his work. The concluding words of the volume reflect Koestler's growing obsession with the flaw in his hierarchical ethics.

"Once we hoped for Utopia, now, in a chastened mood, we can at best hope for a reprieve...for had the dinosaur learnt the art of prayer, the only sensible petition for him would have been to go down on his scaly knees and beg 'Lord, give me another chance'." (Koestler 1955: 253)

3.v. REFLECTIONS ON HANGING

Utopia and capital punishment

In his commentary to Thomas More's original *Utopia*, Paul Turner notes a feature in utopian literature that could equally apply to approaches to Koestler's work.

"The position of More's *Utopia* is rather like that of the baby in the Judgment of Solomon. One school of thought claims it as a Catholic tract, in which anything resembling communist propaganda should be interpreted as moral allegory. Another claims it as a political manifesto, in which all references to religion should be firmly ignored. Both claimants seem more concerned with the rights of ownership than with the work itself..." (Turner 1965:7)

Certainly, it is possible to ignore the references to the Third Order in both *The Age of Longing* and the earlier dystopia of *Darkness at Noon* and interpret Koestler's work in purely political terms, using the author's "Cassandra has gone hoarse" statement of vocational change as evidence for a "political Koestler". Similarly, I have tried to guard against interpretations of Koestler's novels that make light of the Stalinist connection and the original context. Koestler's work is, as I hope to have demonstrated, a synthesis of the spiritual concerns of the Yogi and the social programme of the Commissar. Koestler's practical projects - what Crick calls the "small clear things" (Crick 1989a: 71) - such as the 1946 League, are best also considered in this light rather than as purely political projects *per se* or allegories of Koestler's spiritual ethic.

Such a synthesis, that in Turner's words examines the work itself rather than seeking to claim ownership over it, applies to Koestler's active interest in the campaign to abolish capital punishment in Britain, a campaign that took up all his energies after the publication of *The Trail*.... For More's *Utopia* had itself begun "by pointing out the irrational barbarity of capital punishment" (Turner 1965: 10), suggesting alternatives to hanging: much of Book One in More's work is occupied with a critique of the morality of capital punishment.

For one such as Koestler committed to the hierarchical ethic, then at least the abolition of capital punishment represented one means by which his dystopias might be avoided in a species whose self-destructive tendencies he now recognised. In short, for Koestler as for More, alternatives to hanging were as much part of their spiritual ethic as their blueprint for social revolution - and it would be foolish to consider Koestler's campaign without giving due recognition to the spiritual ethic with which he now operated.

The anti-hanging campaign

According to Cynthia Koestler, her husband finished writing *The Trail*... on 10 February 1955 (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 188). Within two months he had started work on a biography of Kepler, his boyhood hero. However the campaign to abolish capital punishment soon took precedence, for as Levene writes Koestler "saw the campaign as integral to his more general concern with man's creativity and destructiveness" (Levene 1985: 27).

There can be little doubt that Koestler had considered the subject for some time before he and Gollancz embarked upon what Grigg describes as "a full-scale assault on the institution of capital punishment" in the summer of 1955 (Grigg 1975: 125). Cynthia Koestler recalls the "grey despair" on Koestler's face in 1953 when Bentley, a 19-year old grade four mental defective, was hanged as accomplice¹⁷ in the murder

¹⁷Bentley's partner, Craig, fired the fatal shots but as he was only a juvenile, he did not hang. Ludovic Kennedy wrote "the law considered Craig a minor, a child of redemption, Bentley not" (Kennedy 1991: 136). Interestingly,

of a policeman (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 194). And when the Rosenbergs were due to be executed as Soviet spies in the United States, Koestler had sent a telegram to the American President "entreat[ing] you to reprieve the two guilty spies as an act of human charity..." (MS 2379/1: 125). The immediate catalyst for Koestler's decision to organise a national campaign may however have been the case of Ruth Ellis, hanged for shooting her lover in what is generally regarded as a *crime passionel*. But whatever the reasons for embarking upon the campaign, once he began his research it occupied him in an obsessive manner. Cynthia Koestler wrote later

"He could not stop talking or reading about capital punishment when he was not writing about it. At night he continued to dictate the book [*Reflections on Hanging*] to me in his sleep."
(Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 197)

The National Campaign for the Abolition of Capital Punishment (NCACP) held its first meeting on 1 August 1955 - barely two weeks after Arthur Koestler had written to Cynthia informing her "Cap. punishment crusade started" (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 193) and six weeks after Koestler's futile intervention on behalf of the Rosenbergs. Grigg notes that the Campaign was more of a pressure group than a mass protest; certainly the first big rally was not held until November 1955, when Koestler chose not to speak because of his foreign name and accent (Grigg 1975: 126). By the end of 1955, the NCACP had 17,000 declared supporters, swelling to over 26,000 by February 1956. Its effective weapons were to be two books: *Capital Punishment as a Deterrent* and *The Alternative*, an objective analysis of the issues raised by the lawyer Gerald Gardiner, and Koestler's emotive *Reflections on Hanging*.

Koestler's loss of rationality

Grigg argues that no writer has better reason to regard capital

edy also wrote a play based on the Craig/Bentley case entitled *Murder*
y: "The theme of the play was how an illiterate youth like Bentley finds
he condemned cell and for the first time a meaning and purpose to his
; and as he finds it, his life is ended" (Kennedy 1991: 136) - just as the
emned Rubashov found meaning and purpose to his life immediately prior to
execution in *Darkness at Noon*.

punishment as an abomination than Koestler (Grigg 1975: 124). Koestler declares his interest in the subject in the Preface.

"In 1937, during the Civil War in Spain, I spent three months under sentence of death as a suspected spy, witnessing the executions of my fellow prisoners and awaiting my own. These three months left me with a vested interest in capital punishment...Each time a man's or woman's neck is broken in this peaceful country, memory starts to fester like a badly healed wound. I shall never achieve real peace of mind until hanging is abolished." (Koestler 1956: 7)

In a sense, *Reflections...* is the opposite of the spiritual experience its author had gone through in Seville. The Third Order was the spiritual, higher reality that allowed him to escape - and capital punishment was the reality from which his escape was necessary. Thus the book is directly connected with Rubashov in the second ethical novel, with a not dissimilar aim that its readers "should share in imagination, as he did in Seville gaol, the fate of the poor wretches who were executed" (Grigg 1975: 127).

This helps explain the powerful and frequently graphic descriptions of hangings that form the core to the book, which many readers found objectionable. Ian Gilmour of *The Spectator* however found Koestler's attitude "perfectly understandable".

"Indeed his moral fervour combined with his usual literary grace and distinction may conceivably penetrate the cocoon of complacency which protects many retentionists from the realities of the case..." (MS 2424/3)

Nevertheless, parts of *Reflections* had to be rewritten prior to publication because the publishers (Gollancz), taking the legal advice of Gerald Gardiner, feared parts of the book were defamatory (particularly the "Mace-Bearer" case where Koestler's use of false names for the victim and her family were scarcely likely to hide their true identity; and the wider inference of "inhumane judges" who are equally identifiable: Koestler 1956: 81-82).

Two small points deserve particular mention in this thesis. Firstly, a close study of Koestler's arguments against hanging both in *Reflections...* and the serialised *Picture Post* articles he wrote early in 1956 may indicate not merely the strength and subjectivity of Koestler's feelings (using unsubstantiated material on the name of Pierrepont's pub and Lord Goddard's background) but also a certain

bias towards the middle classes. This is not merely my own interpretation; the columns of *The Observer* contained several letters after it serialised extracts from *Reflections*... airing readers' anger at the way in which Koestler used the word "hag" to describe a woman murdered by a youth ("lad"), the terminology being such that Koestler's sympathies were undoubtedly with the youth (MS 2418/2). If Orwell remained faithful to the proles, Koestler as often as not condemned them in *Reflections*... to Broadmoor as mental defectives or as victims whose fate was not entirely undeserved. Even in the "Mace-Bearer" case, there is the strong suspicion in Koestler's interpretation that Donald Martin's¹⁸ victim, his wife Violet, was merely a laundry-maid through whom Donald contracted syphilis on their honeymoon. Donald, in contrast, is described as the Town Hall Superintendent retaining the air of his former Army life in India. "Yet he forgave her the honeymoon present she had given him" (*sic*!) whilst Violet's "sexual coldness" is described as "this debasement of a sacrament...this mortal offence to the male's pride [which] is not known as a provocation to a reasonable man" (Koestler 1956: 88). If Koestler continued to hold Commissar-ethics in utter contempt, here in part is the reason: he did not disguise when he gave vent to his feelings on capital punishment his mistrust of Orwell's "proles". Some might even argue that he used every journalistic trick in the trade to state his own position.

Secondly, one can look at Koestler's response to the complaints he received over the more graphic descriptions in the book as evidence for Koestler's irrational side. Among the many controversial passages in the book is a description of Edith Thompson's prolapse of the uterus as she made her way to the scaffold in Holloway in 1923 (Koestler 1956: 140). Koestler later admitted, in a letter to Dr Todd of 30 May 1956, that such "incidental horrors" are not logically relevant. But, he argued, they are "emotionally relevant". Such is Koestler's emotionally charged state - one only has to read Cynthia Koestler's account of his "Mania", the evenings picking arguments in pubs over capital punishment, and so on - that "emotional relevance" takes over from

¹⁸The names used here are the pseudonyms penned by Koestler.

objective fact¹⁹ or rational argument in *Reflections*.... Here is Koestler the ethicist succumbing to Orwell's accusation of Peter Slavek's "loss of intelligence": or loss of rationality, for as in *Arrival and Departure*, Koestler firmly believed that his arguments for abolition, based on personal experience and treating human beings as sacred individuals, were not amenable to cold, rational discussion. Koestler could no more understand the position of the "hang-hards", as he called them, than Peter could understand Sonia. *Reflections*... is a book that could have been written by Peter Slavek.

Further evidence of the Third Order

One chapter of *Reflections*... stands apart from the rest of the book in its content and dispassionate prose. "Free Will and Determinism" takes up the dilemma of the ethical polarities of the Yogi and the Commissar and examines them in the context of capital punishment. Koestler acknowledged that this was the most difficult chapter to write (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 197); Gilmour concluded the chapter was "unconvincing and irrelevant" (Gilmour 1956). Its author conceded that the philosophical question was one that had frequently been overlooked for very good reasons.

"The issue of free will *versus* determinism is hardly mentioned at all in the century-old controversy on capital punishment. Yet it is really the heart of the matter. It is shunned because it is the oldest and most awe-inspiring problem of philosophy, and probably an insoluble one. Yet I will try to show that our inability to solve the problem is the strongest argument against capital punishment." (Koestler 1956: 93)

One can therefore see why Koestler deemed it necessary to pursue the matter further. Free will *versus* determinism had been at the heart of the Yogi-Commissar dichotomy and was indeed the subtext of the ethical novels, as I have sought to explain in Chapter 1. But until now, it had remained either an academic matter - as in the *Yogi*... essays - or an

¹⁹For instance, part of the drama of Koestler's account of Edith Thompson's execution came from the statement of two warders quoted by Baxter in the 1948 House of Commons debate; after his book had gone to the printers, Koestler discovered the warders were not present and a correction slip had to be inserted in the printed edition, much to Koestler's annoyance.

interpretation of revolutionary ethics. The anti-hanging campaign allowed Koestler the opportunity to relate his ethical evolution to a matter of topical and highly practical concern.

Koestler argues that if we transpose a deterministic view of human behaviour, definitions such as "criminal responsibility" become a nonsense, because a person's actions are wholly determined by the past.

"The function of the law from this strict deterministic point of view is reduced to deterrence, plus reform through corrective conditioning. Praise and blame, punishment as vengeance or retribution, have no logical place in a scientific world-view which treats man as part of the natural universe, and his character and actions as subject to its laws. He reacts in any given situation as he must, for he could only act otherwise if either his character or the situation or both were different."
(Koestler 1956: 94)

Thus the materialistic philosophy of Marxism denies man his free choice whilst emphasising, when wrong "choices" are made, the retributive element of punishment. Koestler points out that even if such a materialistic philosophy holds true, in our everyday lives free will is "a useful and necessary illusion for the functioning of both the individual and society" (Koestler 1956: 95). Conscience can express itself only in the emotional language of praise or blame, even if you know logically that there is nothing to praise or blame because you are not a free agent but a robot.

Koestler then looks at the so-called McNaghten rules (in which the man accused of murder is considered responsible - having a free will - unless proved insane by the various McNaghten criteria) and concludes that the accused is considered to possess a free will unless the defence proves the contrary, namely that he is governed wholly by the universal laws of nature (from which his insanity arose). The freedom of criminal law, according to Koestler, simply means freedom from determination by heredity and environment.

Having concluded that actions are not determined by the physical order of reality, Koestler states that we must substitute a different kind of order or renounce reason.

"To put it bluntly: *the concept of criminal responsibility implies the existence of a super-natural order; it is not a legal, but a theological, concept.*" (author's italics) (Koestler 1956: 99)

It is not therefore a matter of being guilty, in our everyday lives, of trivial misdemeanours; Koestler emphasises the *feeling* of guilt we experience. He maintains that each of us possesses "psychic energy" that often inhibits culpable impulses and may also give us the moral and physical strength to overcome the natural determinants that might otherwise restrict our actions.

"Hence, to say that the accused *ought* to have made a greater effort to restrain himself means to say that a man with a given self in a given set of circumstances is free to react in more ways than one; and that means that the decision which way he will react lies outside the circumstances and outside the self. It implies the existence of a factor 'X', beyond time and causation, beyond the order of nature." (Koestler 1956: 101)

This, of course, is a restatement of hierarchical ethics and an analysis, albeit under a different guise, of Rubashov's "confession". The individual is free to act according to the level of the hierarchy upon which he is operating at any given time: Rubashov becomes aware of his guilt, irrespective of the crime itself, because of a factor outside his control and outside the self: the Grammatical Fiction. Those who are offered a glimpse of "factor 'X', beyond...the order of nature" react, as Rubashov did, in an utterly unpredictable manner to those on lower levels of the hierarchy. Equally, the individual cannot be expected to act according to the rules of a higher or lower level of the hierarchy.

The question that the courts must address, given Koestler's hierarchical ethic and the existence of a Third Order of reality, is whether in a specific case the individual is acting on a lower level of the hierarchy - in other words, his actions being predetermined by his genes or upbringing - or on a higher level of the hierarchy, where the individual has been afforded a glimpse of the Third Order before committing the crime.

"But to decide...that in one case the criminal obeyed the command of his endocrine glands and should therefore be spared, whilst in another case he used his metaphysical freedom to execute a higher design and must therefore be hanged, seems a rather arbitrary procedure." (Koestler 1956: 101)

Courts are given discretion over the sentencing for all crimes (in 1956) barring murder, which, Koestler concludes, must be ethically wrong based on the hierarchical system he has outlined.

Koestler's personal creed

Further evidence of the importance of the Third Order in Koestler's ethics comes from a lengthy footnote appended to page 102, in which he states his own personal beliefs. It is interesting that Koestler's postulation of the Third Order takes on something of a credal statement ("I believe in...") mirroring the two previous occasions where Koestler highlighted such a phrase - his affirmation of the "misfitted brain" hypothesis in his notes for the American radio programme, and the title to his *Picture Post* series on the anti-hanging campaign, entitled "We Believe".

"I think that free will is a fantastic notion, but also that man is a fantastic creature. I believe in the unprovable existence of a factor x: an order of reality beyond physical causation, about whose nature only a negative statement is possible: namely, that in its domain the present is not determined by the past." (Koestler 1956: 102, footnote)

If Koestler was looking for a creed then the evidence suggests that the two main elements of his creed were in position by 1956.

The first element was the reality of the Third Order, which Koestler felt confident enough to use as evidence against capital punishment and which had hitherto been alluded to in his dystopic novels and essays. It is interesting that in the same year (1956) Cynthia and Arthur Koestler conducted a light-hearted but also partially successful experiment in ESP²⁰. This took place when the book was in its final revision stages and quite possibly strengthened the case for Koestler to declare openly his belief in a supernatural order of reality by appending the lengthy footnote.

The second element was the evolutionary flaw that so frequently prevented man from moving up the ethical hierarchy - the "downside", as it were, of the evolutionary legacy that had provided man with bisociative thought - creativity or Polanyi's "intuition". This too was incorporated into *Reflections...* in the chapter headed "The Monthly

²⁰Cynthia recalled the occasion clearly much later: "We sat at a table... 'I'll draw something,' he [Arthur] said, 'and you must guess what it is.' He shielded a piece of paper with one hand as he drew, then put it into his pocket and looked at me challengingly. 'It's a horse,' I said. 'Obviously,' he flourished the drawing. It was the head of a horse - in actual fact, a knight in chess." (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 203)

Sacrifice". If the Third Order was a philosophical argument for abolition, then the "misfitted brain" was the reason for public acceptance of the death penalty. (Not that all those whose faith included acceptance of the Third Order were abolitionists: Koestler reminds his readers that the Bishops who voted in 1810 for death for a five-shilling theft had no more charity than the atheist George Bernard Shaw.) Koestler also refers in this chapter to the "inner kinship" that unites us to the Christies, the Bentleys and the Pierreponts "since what we dislike in them is merely an extreme development of some of the less palatable aspects of ourselves, of some human quality in which we all share" (Koestler 1956: 167).

The "Neanderthal" so despised by Rubashov re-enters as "the little Stone Age man" controlled by the rules of civilised society in all aspects of behaviour except aggression. The condemned man is thus equated with the kind of gladiator that occupied Koestler in writing his first ethical novel. Onlookers at the Old Bailey and spectators at the gladiatorial circus are alike in witnessing a man fighting for his life "in the thrilling uncertainty whether the outcome will be thumbs up or thumbs down" (Koestler 1956: 168). The strength of Neanderthal is now given much more respect after Koestler's acquaintance with the "misfitted brain" hypothesis.

"The point is not to deny the existence of the fur-clad little man in us, but to accept him as part of the human condition, and to keep him under control." (Koestler 1956: 168)

As in *The Age of Longing*, Koestler concludes with a warning against the hypnotic power of tradition and the blind belief that does not question society's ethics. The final sentence of *Reflections on Hanging*, with the statement that capital punishment stands for everything that man must reject if he is to survive, places us firmly in the world inhabited by Hydie and Fedya: the longing for a new faith if only to allow society to survive, let alone flourish. The wider context of human survival may seem to overstate the importance of the issue of how to punish the murderer. But if we accept Koestler's premise that the existence of the Third Order necessitated abolition of capital punishment and its retention was evidence of the evolutionary flaw, then the matter of capital punishment does seem to belong to that

dystopia familiar to his readers from his earlier work.

Conclusion

The anti-hanging campaign drew to a rather ambiguous conclusion. The early scenes of triumph in the Commons lobby after the House had voted to abolish capital punishment in February 1956 were premature, for the House of Lords overturned the Bill and it was a further ten years before the death penalty was suspended. Long before that, Gollancz and Koestler had fallen out, for reasons that demonstrate, in part, the difficulty in assessing Koestler's ethics. Gollancz had hoped that *Reflections...* would stress the religious aspects of capital punishment, and Cynthia Koestler suggests his disappointment in turn delayed the book's publication.

It is, therefore, possible to interpret Koestler's involvement in the campaign, and his earlier "Cassandra has gone hoarse" statement, as the manifestation of political ethics. But a letter that Koestler wrote in March 1956 suggests otherwise.

"Believe me, this thing [the campaign] is not motivated by thirst for battle - rather by thirst for peace of mind." (MS 2418/2)

It is tempting to conclude that, given such peace of mind had proved elusive in the past, Koestler was still searching for an ethical ideal. But I hope that the evidence of the post-war years has demonstrated that Koestler's ethical system was, to all intents and purposes, complete. The lack of peace of mind was due entirely to one of the two basic tenets of Koestlerian ethics, one that had emerged from his study of psychology: the "misfitted brain" hypothesis, which prevented the progression of society to the higher levels of the ethical hierarchy.

But coupled with this lack of peace of mind was an acute spirituality that, although it did not fit easily with the religiosity of those such as Gollancz, nevertheless was the driving force behind all his work, unifying practical projects such as the anti-hanging campaign and dystopic novels such as *The Age of Longing*.

Indeed, the real significance of *Reflections...*, in my opinion, is precisely the open declaration, in the footnote on page 102, of its author's Peter Slavek-like irrationality and in the chapter on free

will and determinism, Koestler's unapologetic acceptance of the existence of a Third Order of reality. Hierarchical ethics was coming to be based more and more upon the distinction between those such as the "hang-hards", the Fedyas and others who had not perceived the Third Order, and the Hydies and others who had.

Curiously, in his autobiography two years' previously, he had stated that it was the 1945 *Yogi...* essay that marked the final attempt to digest the meaning of the solitary dialogue of cell no. 40 in Seville and his mystical experiences of the Third Order. He had concluded then "it had taken five years to digest the hours by the window" (Koestler 1954a: 358). Perhaps Koestler underestimated the hold that the perception of a higher reality had over him. For if he had plotted out the theoretical, if random, means of bisociation by which man may ascend the hierarchy, he had now examined in novelistic form and in practical ethics the consequence of the "misfitted brain" that pulled man downwards. I believe that for Koestler, such was the importance of the Third Order that the rest of his life would be spent exploring the means by which the "misfitted brain" handicap could be overcome and the Man-Universe connection of the *Yogi...* essays re-established, with all the consequences for a working ethic that entailed.

CHAPTER 4: THE THEOLOGY OF A SLEEPWALKER

Introduction

The aim of this final chapter is to evaluate Koestler's theology and assess Koestler's relevance for today, based largely on the first two decades of Koestler's output as an English writer.

Two works, both dating to 1959, shall be used in my attempt to complete the picture of Koestler's mature ethical system. *The Sleepwalkers* is usually discussed within the context of the scientific trilogy completed in 1967 with the publication of *The Ghost in the Machine*. However, in my opinion, the book is as important for students of Koestler's ethics as it is for those examining the merits of his later writings for the reason alluded to by Beloff:

"As its title suggests, the burden of the book was the strong irrational streak that permeated the thought of some of the greatest scientists and intellectual visionaries..." (Beloff 1975: 78)

to which, I hope to add, also permeated his ethics. Thus, the lives of the historical characters in *The Sleepwalkers* can be legitimately examined in terms of Koestler's hierarchical system previously inhabited by purely fictional characters. The characteristics displayed by Rubashov and Peter Slavek are not that far removed from those attributed to Kepler or Galileo.

In the same year that saw the publication of *The Sleepwalkers*, Koestler's application of his ethical system to the natural sciences, its author also completed a television screenplay that confirms, in my thesis, his own position as a scientific sleepwalker. I shall attempt to show that Koestler, in his continuing spiritual struggle, was still obsessed with the non-rational ethic of Peter Slavek and ill at ease with his own scientific upbringing.

The screenplay in question, *The Fall of Dr Icarus*, merits a place alongside *Arrival and Departure* as a work in which its author drew upon his own experiences for inspiration. Examination of the script may also provide important clues both to Koestler's spirituality and the reason why such spirituality was not more openly expressed. The play itself

has not apparently been subject to scrutiny by other Koestlerian scholars. Its complex evolution and the problem of its dating are discussed in Appendix 3.

Taken together, *The Sleepwalkers* and *The Fall of Dr Icarus* - which, incidentally, appear to share an almost identical gestation period in their author's mind and were earmarked for a large audience in their respective media - enable us to understand why Koestler chose to devote the latter part of his life to overtly scientific work rather than exploring the spiritual or ethical implications that were evident in *The Sleepwalkers* as much as in the earlier ethical novels.

The scientific work, therefore, can be interpreted as a natural consequence of the hierarchical system already in place in 1959. I shall therefore argue that Koestler's contribution to science is secondary to his contribution, as yet ignored, to theology and that the factual basis of Koestler's empirical work is, to a great extent, irrelevant.

I aim to show that even in the *Janus* trilogy Koestler remained true to that system of ethics intelligible only by acceptance of the reality of the Third Order. Perhaps Koestler was essentially transcendental in his interpretation of human experience. Unlike other scholars, I believe he may have succeeded in setting down such an interpretation based on his own experience. Thus I hope to demonstrate that underlying all of Koestler's work was an understanding of human nature which emphasised the element of mystery whilst being rooted in objective reality, offering an ethical system quite unlike that of any other author in the present century: a true synthesis of the Yogi and the Commissar.

4.i. THE SLEEPWALKERS

An argument for irrationality

If *The Trail...* signalled Koestler's "change of vocation", its author argued that his next book marked a return to the passionate concern of

his student days - science. Its precise subject, Koestler later admitted, was not easily definable, but was related to man's artistic human creation and his apparent blindness and destructive tendency.

"History reflects them both; but perhaps their clearest reflection is to be found in the history of man's changing vision of the universe." (Koestler 1968b: 11)

Using that last phrase as its subtitle, *The Sleepwalkers* (Koestler 1959), Koestler's contribution to the history of scientific thought, is perceived by most scholars (Graubard 1975, Toulmin 1979, Hamilton 1982) as a new departure on the part of its author into the study of cosmology,

"...a fitting major event along the new path, an original beacon illuminating the workings of progress in science, with cosmology as model." (Graubard 1975: 21)

In fact, *The Sleepwalkers* is better viewed as a summation of Koestler's hierarchical system simply applied to one particular subject (the history of science), just as *Insight and Outlook* had applied the hierarchical system to creativity a decade earlier. The significance of this work lies in its summation of Koestler's mature philosophical system and the glimpses it offers of Koestler's own spirituality.

The Preface indeed recalls Koestler's earlier philosophical works, notably the second *Yogi...* essay and the eponymous essay of *The Trail....* Here the author states his intention at the outset to trace, in the history of science, the change from "destiny from above" to "destiny from below" and the division between religion and science that had been the subject of the *Yogi...* essays.

"Their [Kepler and Galileo's] cosmic quest destroyed the medieval vision of an immutable social order in a walled-in universe together with its *fixed hierarchy* of moral values, and transformed the European landscape, society, culture, habits and general outlook, as thoroughly as if a new species had arisen on this planet." (my italics) (Koestler 1959: 13)

The Sleepwalkers is thus not a history of astronomy but an investigation into the psychological processes of discovery, *à la Insight and Outlook*, that left twentieth century man, in the author's mind, in the moral vacuum inhabited by his fictional creations. Such an investigation is coloured before it begins by Koestler's conviction of the "misfitted brain" theory. Schizophysiology is never far below the

surface in *The Sleepwalkers*, even in the author's explanation of the book's curious title.

"The history of cosmic theories...may without exaggeration be called a history of collective obsessions and controlled schizophrenias; and the manner in which some of the most important individual discoveries were arrived at reminds one more of a sleepwalker's performance than an electronic brain's." (Koestler 1959: 15)

One cannot help wondering whether the reference to the "electronic brain" is a thinly veiled reference to the work of Polanyi and Turing at Manchester in what we now term cybernetics¹.

Cosmological systems, Koestler argued, reflect the particular bias of their authors: *The Sleepwalkers* is no different. Koestler had stumbled across Third Order reality, like a sleepwalker, during his sojourn in the Seville jail. This work was an attempt to give academic credibility in a wider field to what had been, until now, very much a personal philosophical system of the ethical hierarchy - hence, Koestler reckoned, the need for a scholar such as Herbert Butterfield to write its Introduction. If a model for the history of scientific thought was to be put forward, it had to be one which put "ratomorphism" (into which he would place Turing's work) in its place and emphasised man's irrational nature. *The Sleepwalkers* is a summation of a system of philosophical thought that was already firmly established in its author's mind.

Support for my argument may be found from a cursory reading of "Part One: The Heroic Age" which is essentially a reworking of the history of hierarchies that we have discussed in *The Yogi and the Commissar II*. Koestler makes no secret of his admiration for the "unitary awareness" of the Pythagorean world. Mystic intuition is integrated into a perfect philosophical whole: as near to a Koestlerian Utopia as one could ask

¹Polanyi was the driving force behind the work of Alan Turing, the "pioneer of a new science", and though the two held differing philosophical views, it was a joint discussion over Godel's theorem of mind that led Turing to attempt to build an "intelligent thinking machine". (See Hodges 1983: 418ff for a detailed account of the Polanyi-Turing work in cybernetics.) Turing's work had come to Koestler's attention in 1949 in a manner which cast doubt on the validity of Koestler's conclusions in *Insight and Outlook* (see Michael Polanyi to Arthur Koestler, 24 June 1949. MS 2344/7: 110.)

for! Irrationality is a term that Koestler has, up to now, treated only obliquely - notably in the actions of Rubashov and Slavek, in his one-sided interpretation of Hillary's death and in the background of Hydie. But in *The Sleepwalkers*, Koestler lays his cards firmly on the table.

"Why should we allow artists, conquerors and statesmen to be guided by irrational motives, but not the heroes of science?" (Koestler 1959: 73)

The Greek astronomers are the first "heroes of science" to be given the Rubashov treatment, as it were. Koestler suggests that the manner in which they "turned their backs" on the heliocentric system was utterly irrational. The problem, according to Koestler, was that post-Aristotelian astronomers denied the rule of the sun over the planets and affirmed it at the same time. In a sense, the truth or falsity of this is irrelevant, and certainly the history of science is outside the scope of this thesis. But what is important to note is that Koestler used such historical instances to emphasise the constant struggle within the human mind as it sought to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable.

"...this 'controlled schizophrenia' continued throughout the Dark and Middle Ages, until it came to be almost taken for granted as the normal condition of man." (Koestler 1959: 73)

Later, he drops the term 'controlled schizophrenia' in favour of the Orwellian term "double-think" (Koestler 1959: 99, 103) to describe the projection of medieval man's mental conflicts upon "the graceful sky". The reason for such mental conflicts was that the principle of continuity that Koestler argued was rediscovered around 1200AD, offering a hierarchy of living matter - "the chain, thus unified, now reached from God's throne down to the meanest worm" (Koestler 1959: 96) - was now threatened by the Renaissance. The same principle, of course, is familiar to Koestlerian scholars from the staircase analogy of the second *Yogi*... essay. By offering an alternative view of the staircase, the "heroes of science" that were at the heart of Koestler's book were precipitating the division between religion and science that resulted in the modern ethical vacuum as he perceived it.

When he turns from general cosmologies to the lives of those "heroes" that were to the fore of his current study, Koestler could not hide his dislike of Copernicus - "a stuffy pedant, without the flair, the

sleepwalking intuition of the original genius" (Koestler 1959: 201). Indeed, Koestler seems to be placing Copernicus firmly into the Commissar camp alongside Gletkin: phrases such as "almost hypnotic submission to authority", "traditional prejudice" and "the iron teeth of dogma" abound (Koestler 1959: 201, 211), indicating an approach that subsumes Commissar-ethics and Commissar-science as specific indicators of a more general social malaise.

Kepler

If Copernicus can be likened to a Gletkin, then one need look no further than Kepler to find Rubashov in *The Sleepwalkers*. The longest section of the book is devoted to this one man - and was reprinted under the title *The Watershed* a year later (Koestler 1960). Koestler's view of Kepler as the sleepwalker *par excellence* - "There is hardly a page in Kepler's writings...that is not alive and kicking" (Koestler 1959: 245) - is undoubtedly because Koestler's childhood hero was seen as the perfect synthesis of saint and revolutionary, mystic and scientist. His account of Kepler's youth also serves to accentuate the similarities between the Renaissance scientist and his own background. Thus Koestler describes Kepler as "a man whose childhood [was] spent in hell and who had fought his way out of it" (Koestler 1959: 219) - an exaggerated version of the 'man of action' or Baron Munchausen figure that features so prominently in *Arrow in the Blue*.²

Kepler, too, seems to have experienced something akin to Koestler's "hours by the window". That, at least, is Koestler's view as he notes Kepler's reasoning that "the sky does something for man" (Koestler 1959: 245). Kepler's enquiries into the nature of the universe, Koestler goes on to argue, were inspired by a medieval brand of mysticism: and yet they proved "amazingly fertile" (Koestler 1959: 263), just as Koestler's "hours by the window" had proved fertile

²The comparisons between the young Kepler and Koestler are also used in the circa 1968 screenplay for BBC2, *Blind Stargazer* by James Ison (MS 2332/1), particularly their adolescent awkwardness and sense of isolation.

ground for the foundation of his own ethical and spiritual revolution. Even the starting point for the two men seemed remarkably similar (but then Koestler had telegraphed the importance of Kepler's enquiries as long ago as *Arrival and Departure*³): for just as Koestler had sought solace in mathematics in Seville, so Kepler had apparently discovered his own route to the perception of the Third Order through mathematics.

"Kepler said his prayers in the language of mathematics, and distilled his mystic faith into a mathematician's Song of Songs."
(Koestler 1959: 265)

Cynthia Koestler would have us believe that such parallels between the two men came as a revelation to her husband (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 189) - "only now [in 1954]...he discovered in him [Kepler] a kindred spirit". But this was not merely a biographer's identification with his subject. Koestler's elation at discovering the parallels between his own early experiences and those of his childhood hero is reminiscent of Koestler's enthusiasm for using Hillary as proof of his theory of the irreducibility of ethical values. Kepler, like Hillary before him, was used by Koestler in order to show that his hierarchical system, based upon the mystical awareness of the Third Order, could be applicable to contexts other than those he had originally explored.

Thus, if a sense of mystery and the objective existence of Third Order reality had pervaded Koestler's last novel, *The Age of Longing*, these factors were at the forefront now of the great man of science at the centre of Koestler's research - for Kepler had used the word himself as the title of his seminal work, *Mysterium Cosmographicum*.

The main part of Koestler's book concludes with the period from Galileo - and a lengthy account of the famous trial - to Newton; Koestler laments that with the publication of Newton's *Principia* in 1687, mystery had now been removed from the human view of the universe.

"The wild dance of shadows thrown by the stars on the wall of Plato's cave was settling into a decorous and sedate Victorian waltz. All mysteries seemed to have been banished from the

³Thus Peter at the conclusion of Sonia's psychoanalysis: "He felt the -tation of his early student days, when he had suddenly grasped the ciple of Kepler's laws of planetary movement and the chaotic world around was tamed, and transformed into an orderly, harmonious system." (Koestler : 123)

universe, and divinity reduced to the part of a constitutional monarch, who is kept in existence for reasons of decorum, but without real necessity and without influence on the course of affairs." (Koestler 1959: 509)

The implications of irrationality

However, *The Sleepwalkers* does not end with its author's Victorian waltz. Koestler then adds an Epilogue of some thirty pages in which he sums up the implications of the theories he has presented. Once again, his understanding of mankind hinges upon man's intrinsic irrationality, which Koestler suggests has an anatomical basis - a brain of such capabilities that far exceeded man's actual and immediate needs.

"The jerky and basically irrational progress of knowledge is probably related to the fact that evolution had endowed *homo sapiens* with an organ which he was unable to put to proper use...The history of discovery is, from this point of view, one of random penetrations into the uncharted Arabias in the convolutions of the human brain." (Koestler 1959: 514)

Koestler's conclusion is important for two reasons. It is true that his thinking had been leading him towards such a hypothesis since he began writing *Insight and Outlook*. Indeed, he had tentatively hinted at such a conclusion in *The Trail...* essay. But its appearance in the final section of a book on the history of science - and one that, with Butterfield's introduction, its author had hoped would be accepted by mainstream science - demonstrates that for Koestler, irrationality could no longer be swept under the carpet or merely alluded to in his ethical novels. One could compare the Epilogue with the chapter in *Reflections on Hanging* upon free will and determinism: the Epilogue was not necessary in terms of what had gone before, but nevertheless had to be stated as Koestler saw the history of science as giving weight to his own recognition of the Third Order.

Secondly, he could now see the human brain not merely as the schizoid organ that constantly pulled man downwards in the ethical hierarchy. The existence of sleepwalkers proved that "random penetrations into the uncharted Arabias in the convolutions of the human brain", as Koestler poetically put it, enabled man to make the creative or intuitive leaps of imagination necessary for him to progress upward in the ethical

hierarchy. In *Insight and Outlook*, Koestler had focused perhaps too closely upon the detailed mechanisms - notably bisociation - he perceived lay behind creativity. Now he saw in the sheer complexity and size of the human brain the organic foundation of what he called "sleepwalking": suddenly, intuitively, stumbling across a new way of looking at the world.

Religion has a role to play in Koestler's developed ethical system. For Koestler states quite clearly that religion provides the unconscious with intuitive techniques that transcend its dogmatic limitations - in other words, the ability to perceive a spiritual reality that cannot be assimilated into, or described by, lower levels of the hierarchy. Dogma has its place: where else are the seeds of intuition sown if there is not some inkling of a higher reality that has been systemised, however inadequately? But it must always recognise its limitations when intuition or imagination is applied to the religious or ethical quest. Here Koestler argues that the same duality of approach (rational-intuitive) characterises the scientific quest.

"It is therefore a perverse mistake to identify the religious need solely with intuition and emotion, science solely with the logical and rational." (Koestler 1959: 521)

That which Koestler was to refer to in *Icarus* as the "lovers' quarrel" has gone a stage further, to what Koestler calls the contemporary divorce between faith and reason. As we shall see below in examining *Icarus*, this is not due to grounds of hostility: rather there has been a progressive estrangement, with post-Renaissance theology continuing its specialised line, splitting the mind into two halves (the irrational and the rational) whilst science becomes increasingly conservative. The modern scientist reacts to phenomena which do not fit his closed system in much the same way, Koestler reasoned, that his forefathers reacted to the suggestion of new stars appearing in the immutable eighth sphere.

As an example of such conservatism, Koestler points to ESP. Encouraged by Rhine's reaction to *Insight and Outlook*, Koestler had become a member of The Society for Psychical Research early in 1956 whilst researching *The Sleepwalkers* (MS 2381/1: 12). But because parapsychological data do not fit neatly into accepted scientific

thinking, mainstream science has largely refused to investigate such data or fund experimental research (Beloff 1993: 226-234). This situation, Koestler argues, could never have arisen if faith and science had not become divorced from one another.

"As a result of their divorce, neither faith nor science is able to satisfy man's intellectual cravings. In the divided house, both inhabitants lead a thwarted existence." (Koestler 1959: 537)

Post-Galilean science had produced spiritual starvation. The irony is that in Koestler's system this might have been perfectly acceptable had it not been for the capacity of the human brain to provide intuitive perception of objective spiritual reality.

The possible implications for ethics are not lost on Koestler either.

"The dials on our laboratory panels are turning into another version of the shadows in the cave. Our hypnotic enslavement to the numerical aspects of reality has dulled our perception of non-quantitative moral values; the resultant ends-justifies-the-means ethics may be a major factor in our undoing." (Koestler 1959: 542)

In other words, the longer mankind remains apparently trapped or "enslaved" to the lower level of the ethical hierarchy, in which reality is explained by solely rational phenomena, the more our perception of the non-quantitative moral values upheld by sleepwalkers such as Rubashov or Slavek will become dulled to the point that the dogma of the ends justifying the means becomes acceptable within the framework of a modern scientific world view.

The lives of irrational thinkers encouraged Koestler to believe that his fictional anti-heroes such as Rubashov were not *that* exceptional. Sleepwalkers would always appear on the scene to remind man of the Third Order reality he has apparently forgotten. That, ultimately, is the point of *The Sleepwalkers*. It is a moral or ethical lesson that may, in part, have been aimed at Koestler's one-time collaborator, Polanyi and the other Manchester cyberneticists⁴. Be that as it may, the final words of the book are once again, as in the Prologue, a

⁴There is evidence to suggest that cybernetics had already been the focus of Koestler's attention shortly after the publication of *Insight and Order*: in October 1949 Koestler had organised a symposium to discuss a paper by Polanyi entitled "Can the mind be represented by a machine?" (MS 13)

disparaging reference to the kind of powerful "thinking machine" that Turing had attempted to construct. The lives of Kepler and others may, its author hoped, "have some sobering effect on the worshippers of the new Baal, lording it over the moral vacuum with his electronic brain." (Koestler 1959: 542)

"Sabbatical sleepwalkers"

The significance of Koestler's claim for irrationality as the most important feature of the human mind was not lost on reviewers. Nor, of course, was it a complete surprise.

"Those of us who have watched Koestler's political evolution will not be completely taken aback, as others may be, when they find it is an attack on scientists and a defence of the theologians." (Calder 1959)

But if the theme of irrationality was one which united Koestler's ethics and his historical overview of science, as Koestler had suggested in the Epilogue, once again he succumbed to the fault of not providing a cure to match his pessimistic diagnosis of the human condition. Calder pointed out that the real anxiety people felt over the modern "divorce" between science and religion was the subsequent failure of the latter to provide moral guidance in a world dominated by quantitative science.

The Sleepwalkers does not help. However, one can argue that here, as in Koestler's other 1959 work *The Fall of Dr Icarus* (see below), Koestler is using the dystopic technique he employed in his earlier fiction to point out precisely the *impossibility* of a proper understanding of "non-quantitative moral values" in the post-Newtonian world. The greater insight of sleepwalkers such as Kepler was simply the exception that proved the rule. Moral guidance could no longer be offered to a society that had adopted Newtonian physics or Darwinian biology as its central tenets.

If reviewers felt distinctly uncomfortable at Koestler's analysis of modern science, theologians found little consolation in the author's description of the consequences of a fixed hierarchy. Fison, for example, opined that the Church faced a similar situation to that

encountered by the contemporaries of Copernicus and Kepler. Afraid to change its fixed horizons, Fison accused the Church of being "sabbatical sleepwalkers".

"Is it not possible that we too today are, for the same reason as these great men of old and in many ways more than they, walking in our sleep? Have we not got our centres wrong?" (Fison 1960)

Applying the same analysis to the Church that Koestler had applied to the history of science, Fison concluded that "a splendid means of grace" (the Church) had become an end in itself and therefore what he termed "the most effective insulator from grace".

Fison's analysis immediately highlights one of the great strengths of *The Sleepwalkers*; for Koestler had intended that the book be read as an analysis rather than a history of a specific subject. The framework for the analysis had been laid out in the *Yogi...* essays and *Insight and Outlook* (and had been used as the background for the actions of Koestler's fictional characters). The framework consisted of the laws of the hierarchy, bisociation as the mechanism for creativity, and the organic functioning of the human brain in predisposing man to violence and self-destruction whilst also offering random glimpses of a higher reality. The framework was general enough to be applicable to theology as much as the history of science.

All Fison did was apply the Koestlerian model to a subject outside Koestler's remit. If, as Fison thought, the Christian Church was operating within the lower levels of a fixed hierarchy out of which only the occasional sleepwalker might break, and one in which had its own confining theological language and constructs, then that level of the hierarchy becomes an end in itself, and the Church is guilty of the same "ratomorphism" that Koestler loathed in science. In this sense, *The Sleepwalkers* is Koestler's most theological book, based on his understanding of the human mind.

One can perhaps begin to understand why Koestler had earlier objected so vehemently to C. S. Lewis. Lewis, for all his theological insight, represented to Koestler the closed mind and fixed hierarchical view of dogmatic Christianity, incapable of seeing beyond an intelligible Christocentric universe to a greater mystery. Had Koestler not become so obsessed by his schizophysiology theory, the approach that Fison

offered might have been taken up by the author to lead to an overtly theological work. If this sounds fanciful, one only has to remember that Koestler's continuing spiritual quest had led him to mystical religion in India and the Far East at the very time that *The Sleepwalkers* was published, leaving behind him in avowedly Christian Britain

"a sobering and humbling book for all of us who profess as Christians that we should outthink as well as outlive and outdie our non-Christian brethren." (Fison 1960)

Wilson makes it clear what Koestler was seeking to achieve, again alluding to levels of the ethical hierarchy that were beyond those inhabited by specific religions.

"It is not a desire for a religious revival, but a plea for the reinstatement of the idea of purpose in the universe." (Wilson 1959)

Wilson did not point out however that such a conclusion had already been found by readers of *The Age of Longing*.

Mental and ethical evolution

One of the most complete analyses of *The Sleepwalkers* is offered by Mark Graubard (Graubard 1975), who stresses two major themes that emerge from the book. The first is the idea that progress is not continuous but a random zig-zag path. It is the randomness of human thought (the sleepwalking metaphor of people stumbling as if in a daze with little idea of where they are going) that is Koestler's most important contribution to philosophy, according to Graubard. Koestler had wondered how the human species could evolve so comparatively quickly from cave-dweller to spaceman and had concluded that in mental evolution, as in biological evolution, a process of natural selection was at work. In fact, what Graubard does not appear to realise is that Koestler had been exploring this concept in the ethical novels. Rubashov, like Spartacus before him or Peter after him, did not have a clear vision of where his ethical ideas were taking him. But because all of these characters had each gained some insight from their different experiences of the Third Order, each had a spiritual advantage over his contemporaries that led to their systems either

surviving or (in the case of Spartacus) being incorporated to a certain extent in society. The inheritance of an acquired higher ethic is clearly spelt out at the conclusion of *The Gladiators*.

"'He who receives the Word has a bad time of it,' he [the Essene] said. 'He must carry it on and serve it in many ways, be they good or evil, *until he may pass it on.*'" (my italics) (Koestler 1939: 391)

Whether Koestler was entirely original in proposing a theory of mental evolution is a moot point; Graubard gives the credit to Kuhn for expanding Koestler's ideas whereas we now know, from Kuhn's own admission⁵, that the concept was originally developed by Polanyi.

Graubard's contribution to Koestlerian scholarship lies not so much in his analysis of *The Sleepwalkers* as in his thesis that Koestler was himself a sleepwalker, a concept that I am happy to borrow and will expand after an analysis of *Dr Icarus*. For if Koestler had pointed out that geniuses responsible for major mutations (note the biological language) in the history of thought had shared the same sense of scepticism, frustration with tradition and a growing feeling of paranoia and messianism, Koestler was surely guilty himself on all three counts. I have already noted the overkill of Koestler's post-Freudian terminology in *Insight and Outlook* (see pp. 149-150 above); Graubard identifies a similar overkill in *The Sleepwalkers* (Graubard 1975: 26), particularly in Koestler's treatment of those figures like Ptolemy he was quick to dismiss.

But Graubard, like many other Koestlerian scholars, fails to see the unity of Koestler's work. There is no mention of "the hours by the window" or the influence of the Third Order in Graubard's thesis. Yet a perception of the Third Order may lie at the heart of the mechanism of mental evolution. For if, as Graubard points out (Graubard 1975: 28), mental evolution is a process that takes us from sensations to conceptions, such a process equates with the three tiers of reality that Koestler identified in the Spanish jail. The point here is that mental evolution was not a concept Koestler plucked out of the air but

⁵Magda Polanyi informed Koestler in 1975 that she was in possession of a letter from Thomas Kuhn in which he admitted the charge of plagiarism. (MS '7: 246)

one which he had been working on since the ethical trilogy. *The Sleepwalkers* is understood only when one realises that the central triptych in this portrait gallery, to use Hamilton's analogy (Hamilton 1982: 296), of Kepler flanked by Copernicus and Galileo is mirrored on the opposite wall by those other sleepwalkers, Rubashov flanked by Spartacus and Peter Slavek.

4. ii. THE FALL OF DR ICARUS

Koestler's critique of Christian ethics

The play begins with Dr Icarus, a successful psychotherapist, interviewing Margaret for the post of secretary. This should immediately alert the reader's attention to a parallel between Icarus and Koestler: for in 1948, the author had interviewed the young Cynthia Jefferies for the post of secretary under remarkably similar circumstances⁶. Later, Dr Icarus will marry Margaret, just as its author would later marry his young secretary. In passing, one should also note the frequent references to fencing and duelling - a unique reminder in Koestler's fictional output of his student duelling days.

Koestler's distrust of the working classes - partly responsible for his shift from Commissar-ethics - is reflected in Icarus, in the doctor's early warning to Margaret of his cleaner, Mrs Pierce.

"You cannot take her [Mrs Pierce] too seriously. I would say without fear of exaggeration that she is the most serious factor in our civilisation. In the Middle Ages she was the cause why innocents like you were burnt alive at the stake. In the French Revolution she sat at the foot of the guillotine, knitting horrible pullovers and socks. In short, Mrs Pierce is a symbol of the hysteria which has been haunting the world since the moment when Eve put her fig leaf on." (MS 2325/4: 4)

Note "the most serious factor" and "hysteria": in Koestler's mature ethical system, the threat of Commissar-ethics appears to lie in the

⁶Not only the circumstances of the interview but Margaret's "innocence" - strong parallels with our known account of Cynthia's first meeting with 'uture husband (see Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 53-55; 65).

manifestation of the "misfitted brain" theory on a *significantly large scale in the population*. Certainly, Koestler's increasing use of psychopathological terminology betrays his mistrust of society to reinstate the spiritual connection of the Yogi.

It is my contention that Act One is a summation of Koestler's ethical progression of the 1940s. Two of the post-war ethical themes are aired at length: the aborted 1946 League was clearly perceived by Koestler in retrospect as a critical failure, judging by Icarus' "The day will come" speech (MS 2325/4: 5). Secondly, Hector behaves like Peter in seeking the security of his boyhood existence before "The Fall" and the death of a childhood sibling (in Hector's case, his sister Judy). The reappearance of such themes seems to confirm the importance of the pararational ethic to Koestler's post-war ethics.

But if these themes are merely reworking old material, of more interest is Koestler's exploration of a Christian ethic in a manner that elsewhere is expressed only by Hydie. For Margaret's innocence, à la Cynthia Jefferies, is only half the story; she confides to Icarus that if born male, she would have been a conscientious objector, prompting the line that Koestler reworked for the climax of the Hydie-Sister Boutillot dialogue in *The Age of Longing* - "So I am going to have a saint as an assistant?"⁷ The link between Peter Slavek's self-sacrificing ethic and Hydie's more overtly Christian mysticism of her youth is evident in the Icarus-Werner debate upon the efficacy of the Christian faith.

Icarus comes across as a scientist whose pragmatic concern aligns himself with Sister Boutillot's view that a Christological solution to the world's problems is not enough: "a cross alone won't cure patients" (MS 2325/4: 16). From the evidence of this screenplay, it would appear that whilst Koestler's fully-developed ethical hierarchy admitted the need for a "cure" to the "misfitted brain", a purely Christian ethic was not the answer.

⁷The passage in question in *The Age of Longing* is as follows:
 "During his only interview in all those years with his sister-in-law, the
 Mother Superior, the Colonel had asked with wistful resignation: 'Is my
 sister going to be a saint?' 'She would make a rotten saint', the Mother
 Superior had remarked drily..." (Koestler 1951: 73)

In Koestler's fictional output, this is the only example where the author seems ready to discuss the application of Christianity although, as we have seen in *The Yogi...* essays, he had admitted that the Christian hierarchy had been supplanted by the scientific hierarchy. In *The Age of Longing*, this was the dilemma faced by all the characters with the exception of Hydie, who could not shake off her mystical past. But any doubt that Koestler does not equate mysticism with Christianity is dispelled in the crucial Icarus-Werner dialogue in *The Fall of Dr Icarus* (see Plate 4: Werner's mysticism is linked to Seville). Icarus concludes by postulating that psychotherapy is a more appropriate response to sinners in the ethical hierarchy.

A return to Yogi-ethics

If the dialogue of Act One makes frequent use of *The Yogi...* material, there is some evidence that here in the post-war years Koestler had narrowed down the problem to the re-establishing of the "umbilical cord" between the individual and the world - the prerogative of the Yogi. The veiled diagnosis of Mrs Pierce quoted above exposes the fault of the Commissar and the resultant "revolution betrayed"; more explicitly, however, in his analysis of Case One (Hector in the later *Icarus* scripts) Icarus categorically states that the problem will be how to re-establish Hector's connection with the world. Interestingly, however clumsy this dialogue may appear, the phrase is untouched in the reworking of Act One, from which one may infer that Koestler remained primarily concerned with Yogi-ethics and a continuing search for the means by which his own "oceanic sense", so much to the fore in Seville, might be rekindled.

Werner remains a more unambiguous reflection of Koestler's suspicion of conventional religious solutions to Hector's condition. Icarus' assessment of Werner is an important statement of the dilemma implicit in Koestler's later works, where the search for the spiritual certainty of Seville remained elusive for himself and his fictional creations.

"Werner had a lovers' quarrel with God all through the war.

They are suing each other for desertion." (MS 2325/4: 18)

At the start of Act Two, Icarus and Margaret have been married

eighteen years; their marriage is in difficulty, a fact not unnoticed by their sensitive 17-year old son, Felix. Hector reminds us again of Peter Slavek (or Hillary as portrayed by Koestler) by showing the same determination for unwarranted heroism, in his desire to "throw himself" into the Spanish Civil War. Koestler's embarrassment at his own former naivety in the same conflict is voiced by Icarus.

"You have no idea what a war is - not even a regular war; and you want to throw yourself into a civil war, in a far country, which is no business of yours, in the name of some romantic, world-saving -ism." (MS 2325/4 Act Two 8)

Perhaps too Koestler was reflecting upon the romantic optimism of his own practical ethic, at least that of the "world-saving"⁸ project that came to fruition in *Insight and Outlook*.

But if Koestler's embarrassment at his own former actions is hardly surprising, what is fascinating is his Sonia Bolgar-like dismissal of *all forms* of sacrifice on the part of Icarus. The lack of Icarus' understanding of a non-rational ethic is nowhere better expressed in the screenplay than in the dialogue between the father and son, Icarus and Felix.

Icarus sees his son's actions - his first sexual experience, his failure to win a scholarship and so on - as based on cause and effect. With the tool of fictional dialogue, Koestler explores the application of his ethical hierarchy to the actions of a potential criminal (in this case, Icarus' son). Felix's reply to his father's deterministic diagnosis of his problems is redolent of the arguments that Koestler expressed in the critical "Free will and determinism" chapter of *Reflections on Hanging* which interrupted the revision of the screenplay.

"So the choice is not mine. I can stick a knife into you. It's just cause and effect. I have no freedom. I am trapped. I have no will of my own...Blind forces push me wither and thither. Yet I feel it, I feel it here that it isn't true. One of us must be crazy." (MS 2325/4: Act Two 17).

The ensuing dialogue was refashioned in the Burch-Solovief debate in *The Call-Girls* over a decade later. But in the 1950s, it is Icarus who

⁸The phrase used by Koestler himself in a letter of December 1945: MS 1: 197.

is accused of behaving like Burch.

"Do you know what you [Icarus] are doing to people? You mutilate them. You cut the bowels of Christ out of them...Well, slice me up and put me under a microscope." (MS 2325/4: Act Two 18-19)

For those familiar with *Twilight Bar* and *The Age of Longing*, it will be no surprise that the debate between father and son is not satisfactorily resolved. Even Felix's attempt at suicide is not carried through, as he is interrupted - after a further Koestlerian attempt to highlight the folly of explaining violent action in terms of the lower levels of the ethical hierarchy.

Koestler's intriguing exploration of the determinism of Sonia or Burch takes a dramatic twist in the final act, in which the close friendship between Koestler and Richard Hillary resurfaces. If, up to now, the dramatic tension between Icarus and his son is simply a restatement of the Fedya-Hydie clash of ethical opposites - where, it could be argued, Koestler is playing devil's advocate by siding with a 'Fedya' in the person of Icarus - then suddenly Koestler *personalises* the drama by making Felix desire to emulate Richard Hillary.

The personalisation of Yogi-ethics

The action of Act Three takes place in 1940: from the dialogue, we can place the action more precisely to the autumn of 1940 shortly after the Battle of Britain. Felix surprises his father in the aftermath of Icarus' 50th birthday party (organised by former patients under the collective name of Oedipus Ex!) by announcing his wish to become a pilot.

"I don't know what I am. But I know what I would like to be. I would like to be like the man who said 'In an age when to love one's country is vulgar - to love God, archaic - and to love mankind, sentimental - you do all three.' *He was my age, a pilot shot down and burnt.*" (my italics) (MS 2325/4: Act Three 33).

The quotation and the following description point unmistakably to Hillary.

Icarus: "A remarkably mature man for his age."

Felix: "Those who die young walk fast."

Icarus: "And you wish to follow his example."

To be burned alive is rather pitiful."

(MS 2325/4: Act Three 33)

Such references would have been understandable if, say, Koestler had written the play in 1944 instead of rewriting *Twilight Bar*. Equally, one might expect such references to be expunged from later versions of the play. But this is not the case. Much of the last Act is occupied with a discussion of Hillary's non-rational ethic, *intended for a wide audience - this was Koestler's only work created for the medium of television - in 1959, sixteen years after Hillary's death*. Nor can one accuse Koestler of mistakenly thinking that Hillary would still be a figure of major public interest⁹, even though *The Last Enemy* remained in print and had been translated into several languages.

The question must be asked: why did Hillary remain a subject of such biographical and ethical importance to Koestler for such a long time, a subject not even eclipsed by Koestler's hero-worship of Kepler? The answer lies in the text of the play itself.

Koestler had attempted to move away from specific and historical examples of a pararational ethic, in which the hero (or anti-hero) was influenced by a personal experience of Third Order reality, towards a more general working of pararational ethics in which the Third Order exists independently of the characters - as is the case in *The Age of Longing* (see Chapter 3) or *Insight and Outlook*. But, as we have seen, critics were not convinced. The personalisation of pararational ethics remained the only technique open to Koestler to silence his critics - and Richard Hillary, rather than Kepler or Bukharin, remained in Koestler's distorted view of Hillary's 'sacrifice' the perfect embodiment of such an ethic, at least for an English television audience.

Also, Koestler was apparently taken aback at the strength of the

⁹His enthusiasm to publish a volume of Hillary's letters during the war - precisely because, he had argued at the time, once the war was over, they would no longer be of public interest (MS 2418/1). Yet in the same year as *The Sleepwalkers* was published and in the year that *Icarus* was deleted, Koestler chose to commence his inaugural address at an Indian symposium on "Belief and Literature" with a further account of his friendship with Richard Hillary (Koestler 1968a: 32-33).

(deterministic, he thought) psychological sciences¹⁰. If the Behaviourism of the Icaruses and Sonia Bolgars of this world was to be "demolished" as Koestler had wished in 1946 (MS 2327/2), clearly general theories would not suffice. Richard Hillary would be recalled to illustrate Koestler's argument.

It should also be noted that the Hillary/Slavek ethic favoured by Felix is expressed in Christological terms. Felix's self-knowledge of his destiny - "I know what I would like to be" - again provides the cue for a Koestlerian clash between religion and science, as Felix repeats his accusation to Icarus of trying "to cut the bowels of Christ out of me...Glory be, your experiment failed".

Icarus' rationality too ultimately fails him. Perhaps Koestler felt that in the conclusion of *Arrival and Departure*, not enough attention had been paid to the reaction of Sonia to Peter's *volte-face* with its implied rejection of her "cure". Now Koestler is able to play out the tragedy of those who cannot, or will not, understand pararational ethics through the central character of Icarus.

The tragedy seems at first innocuous enough.

Icarus: "All I have tried was, since you were born, to make you live and think rationally."

Felix: "Your kind of rationality defeated itself long ago."
(MS 2325/4: 35)

However, "rationality", as in *The Sleepwalkers*, has become a derogatory term. Those who live and think rationally not only perceive the world differently from the sleepwalkers to whom we owe so much but they have, according to Koestler, not seen reality; or so Felix tells his father.

"You seem unable to grasp that logic has nothing to do with all this...Logically [in the war in 1941], we are outnumbered, outwitted, hopelessly alone. So we are carrying on against logic. Logic has become a luxury, like butter. Oh, I wish I could make you see reality, you dehydrated apostle." (MS 2325/4: 34)

The gulf between Felix and Icarus is as great as that between Rubashov and Gletkin, Peter and Sonia, Hydie and Fedya - or between Kepler and his contemporaries. Icarus is helpless in preventing his son from

¹⁰He had written in the margin of his notes to the aborted second volume *Sight and Outlook*, alongside the typed text "Today, when...all the major aspects of Behaviourism have been demolished" the words "written in 1946 - what optimism!" (MS 2327/2).

joining the RAF. The tragedy of the "split brain" and the divorce between faith and reason has been explored in many of Koestler's works before and since, but nowhere does it take on the poignancy that it does in *Icarus* when the split is personified as that between father and son¹¹.

The play concludes with *Icarus* retelling a dream of the previous night in which he was sinking towards the bottom of the sea. It is a none too subtle reference to the conclusion of the eponymous Greek legend; but if the screenplay had been realised, viewers would surely have been aware that this was also a replay of the ending of *Arrival and Departure*, only with more tragic consequences and this time perceived through the eyes of rationalism.

"A lovers' quarrel with God"

In spite of such references to *Arrival and Departure*, *Icarus* is unique in the Koestler canon. For unlike his identification with Hillary in the ethical novels, Koestler uses Hillary's higher ethic as a threat to his own logical and scientific ethical system. Hillary reappears not as an ally but, if one treats the screenplay on its face value, as directly opposed to Bolgar-like determinism.

One possible explanation is that Koestler is demonstrating yet again that he was unable to write other than semi-autobiographically, and that his suspicion of a higher ethic is simply yet another restatement of his own position in the 1930s, before the "hours by the window" at Seville. *Icarus* therefore becomes the old "Koestler in sandals" figure of *The Gladiators*. Such a theory has its attractions, not least the fact that *Icarus* could be seen as the semi-fictional jottings of Koestler's spiritual journey that he was writing simultaneously in the late 1940s and early 1950s, published as *Arrow in the Blue* and *The*

¹¹ In 1955, Koestler in fact learnt that he had become a father. He had confided to Harold Harris that he would have made "an intolerable father" (Koestler, A. & C. 1984: 232). One cannot help wondering if the birth of his son, C-I, on 13 April that year, resulted in Koestler alluding to his own suspicions in a fictional relationship between father and offspring that is down due to a father's intolerance.

Invisible Writing. A semi-autobiographical interpretation might also explain why the breakdown of Icarus' marriage occupies much of the screenplay, mirroring Koestler's stormy relationship with Mamaime.

But as I have mentioned with reference to Rees' autobiographical interpretation of *Darkness...*, it does a creative writer like Koestler a severe injustice to suggest that he is not capable of distancing himself from his characters, even one whose scientific background appears to be so close to his own. The problem is compounded by new evidence which has demonstrated that Koestler's only other fictional exposé of psychoanalysis was written twenty years earlier, even before *The Gladiators*!¹¹ Why should Koestler return to a theme he had more than adequately covered as a young writer and had finally abandoned with the curtailment of *Arrival and Departure II*? Unless one can answer that question satisfactorily, *Icarus* remains an anachronism - and the 'problem play' for the Koestlerian scholar.

My own answer is that Koestler returned antagonistically to the Hillary/Slavek higher ethic theme precisely because he remained, to the end of his life, envious of Hillary and of the 'fraternity of the dead' that Hillary enjoyed with devout Anglicans such as Pease¹². Koestler, in his own perception, never quite made it into that fraternity. Thus, in his penultimate ethical piece of fiction (superseded only by *The Call-Girls*), Koestler cannot quite bring himself to be on the same side as Peter Slavek or Richard Hillary. The spiritual struggle continued.

¹¹See Koestler, A. and Nemeth, A. (1996) in which Inspector Konrad Lor - "policier dandy buvant sec, s'exaltant, lançant des oeillades aux s" - appears as the first autobiographical portrait of the young Koestler. or is described as a logical detective in the manner of Sherlock Holmes uses psychoanalysis to solve his crimes.

¹²That is not to say that the "fellowship" Hillary enjoyed with the dead meant the two were similar in their theological outlook. "The latter [se] grew up in a simple, family faith whereas the former's [Hillary's] 'fellowship with my dead' was a much more metaphysical concept...more than a 'covery of Christian faith in an after life'" (Sainsbury, pers. comm.). This also be equally true of any 'fraternity' Koestler continued to seek with dead friends: it would be dangerous to conclude from such a search that Koestler sought or believed in *Christian* concepts of post-death communion. All one safely conclude is that he probably did seek fellowship in an abstract, Christian context.

He could not retreat into the womb of faith (a phrase he used in *The Invisible Writing* repeated in *Icarus*); the "oceanic sense" eluded him.

Koestler might have become a very different writer if Hillary had not been killed. The alleged plans to share a house together, the zealousness with which Koestler had pursued the project of a Hillary Memorial Volume and his readiness to serve on the Hillary Trust, all point to the seriousness with which Koestler took the embodiment of his own higher ethic. Hillary was among the closest of Koestler's colleagues during the war, and it is in that war-time setting that *Icarus* provides, in my opinion, the means by which we can properly understand Koestler's spirituality. Might it not be Koestler rather than Werner who had "a lovers' quarrel with God" all through the war?

Hillary's death remained the enigma that Koestler could not explain to his own satisfaction (although some might say that it served Koestler's interests not to explain it¹³). *Icarus* is his final attempt to apply scientific ethics to analyse Hillary's self-sacrifice, a painful reminder to Koestler of his ongoing spiritual struggle and the need to reconcile rational and irrational behaviour in his hierarchical ethics.

In my view, *Icarus* reveals Koestler to be the sleepwalker *par excellence*, at one moment able to identify with the mysticism of a Hyde or perceive the spiritual world through the eyes of a Rubashov, but remaining for the most part on the lower level of the hierarchical plane inhabited by the Fedyas and Icaruses of whom he writes with such conviction and feeling. Here are literary clues of a sleepwalker ultimately unable either to understand or to emulate the higher ethic of Richard Hillary, yet capable of stumbling across the means by which a spiritual world may be understood and the spiritual insights of the Yogi and the social concern of the Commissar reconciled.

¹³Burn is the most scathing critic on this point, proposing that Koestler's thesis "seems to me to use Richard as a guinea-pig" (Burn 1988:

4.iii. CONCLUSION: EVALUATION OF A SLEEPWALKER

Koestler as a scientist

In *The Age of Longing* and *The Sleepwalkers*, Koestler had postulated that the size and complexity of the human brain was to blame both for man's destructive tendencies and his creativity. However, Koestler's model was still a working hypothesis that lacked empirical scientific data with which to back up his hierarchical metatheory. Also, I would argue that Koestler in 1959 was unsure whether he wished to highlight man's creative side (as he did with Kepler) or the darker and more primitive side of human nature, with its concomitant lack of understanding of higher reality (as revealed in *Icarus*).

Initially, Koestler's scientific work steered him towards a more optimistic view of human nature, as he continued the theme of creativity from *Insight and Outlook* and *The Sleepwalkers* and applied it to all creative activity in *The Act of Creation*. He set out his plan in a letter to Polanyi in January 1961.

"I realise that you would prefer me to write novels and biographies instead of what I am doing. But there are seasons in life, and I do believe that this attempt to get at the basic pattern of the creative process in science and art, and all that it implies, is worth making...ever since that first immature attempt in *Insight and Outlook* I felt guilty for having abandoned the subject without bringing it to a conclusion." (MS 2344/7: 196)

It is perhaps unfortunate that Koestler's work on creativity has been eclipsed by what is generally regarded as "a deep vein of pessimism and gloom" in his writing (Beloff 1975: 70). For the extrapolation that Beloff credits to Koestler from "some of the most appalling events of recent history" to mankind in general is not strictly accurate. The "misfitted brain" had also enabled mental evolution to take place and allowed the occasional sleepwalker a glimpse of an infinite spiritual reality. The self-sacrificing actions of Rubashov, Hillary or Slavek were as attributable to the "grotesque quirk of evolution" (Beloff 1975: 70) that has endowed us with our large brain as the violent acts of the Number Ones or the threat of destruction that looms large at the end of *The Age of Longing*.

The problem, of course, is that Koestler allowed himself to become sucked into a debate on empirical science that overshadowed the hierarchical metatheory that is the subject of my thesis. Beloff may agree with those critics who saw *The Act of Creation* as philosophical (or even theological) rather than empirical; but in 1964 a chance reading of a paper in *Modern Medicine* changed the course of Koestler's scientific writing.

The paper in question was Paul MacLean's "Man and his animal brains" (MacLean 1964). Not only did MacLean's paper back up Koestler's suspicion of neoDarwinism, but by proposing the concept of a hierarchical organisation within the nervous system, Koestler had now acquired what he saw as empirical evidence for his "misfitted brain" principle. The merits of the MacLean-Koestler model are a subject for another thesis; suffice to say, Koestler himself wrote that MacLean's ideas provided "a most valuable correction" to his, as yet, unpublished ideas on the hierarchy of the human brain (MS 2347/1: 91). MacLean would later refer to "real intellectual collaboration here" (MS 2347/1: 184). Cynthia Koestler, writing in her diary in February 1967 after *The Ghost...* had gone to press, noted that Arthur "would like to write a short book with Paul MacLean" (MS 2305) - the clearest possible indication that Koestler grasped the significance of applying the triune brain theory to human evolution, thus explaining "the predicament of man". Here was an anatomical explanation for the moral vacuum so keenly felt by Hydie and others.

"If the evidence had not taught us to the contrary, we would expect an evolutionary development which gradually transformed the primitive old brain into a more sophisticated instrument - as it transformed claw into hand, gill into lung. Instead, evolution *superimposed a new structure on an old one*, with partly overlapping functions and *without providing the new with a clear-cut hierarchical control over the old* - thus inviting confusion and conflict." (author's italics) (Koestler 1975: 281-282)

The die was cast: Koestler, by adopting an anatomical model, now had to answer the claims and counter-claims of empirical scientists. MacLean's work also ensured that Koestler's writings would become ever

more pessimistic¹⁴, and it is this that Beloff and others highlight to the detriment of the earlier non-empirical studies on creativity.

The central tenets of the MacLean-Koestler triune brain model, as published in *The Ghost in the Machine*, can be summed up as follows.

1. A rapid expansion of the neocortex in hominid evolution.
2. The suppression, rather than the disappearance, of more primitive brain systems into the lower regions of the cortex.
3. The failure on man's part to co-ordinate the "three brains".

Until recently, the paucity of hominid fossil data has meant that the first of these tenets could not be tested. But from the discoveries of fossil skulls made by Richard Leakey a clear pattern is emerging of rapid encephalisation from "Lucy" (*Australopithecus afarensis*) to *Homo habilis* and our immediate ancestor, *Homo erectus* (Leakey and Lewin 1992: 67-134). Koestler has been proved correct in this respect. There has indeed been an explosion in the relative brain size of humans: "three times that of the average monkey or ape" (Leakey and Lewin 1992: 246) in less than one million years.

Empirical scientists would not dispute the first of Koestler's criteria for schizophychology - nor indeed, since Broca's discovery of the limbic system, would they argue against the existence of primitive brain systems in the lower regions of the human cortex.

However, it is the third tenet of Koestler's thesis - the matter of the lack of "co-ordination" - that is most controversial. Dennis Potter, upon reading *The Ghost...*, was reminded of the similarities between the tensions within Koestler's reptilian/mammalian brain system and those in the Freudian struggle between *id* and *ego*. Koestler, in Potter's view, was attempting

"to drug the serpents...almost a biochemical updating of the Dickensian thought that the world would be all right if only people would be good." (Potter 1967)

Once again, Koestler had overegged the pudding, extrapolating perhaps

¹⁴My own research indicates that Koestler hardened his pessimistic views on schizophychology in the last decade of his life e.g. "La pulsion vers autodestruction" (Koestler 1971); the first autograph manuscript of the preface to *Bricks to Babel* in which Koestler refers to the "urge of our species towards self-destruction" (later changed) (MS 2318/3).

too much from MacLean's anatomical evidence - although MacLean himself resorted to psychological imagery later, referring to the three brains as "everpresent personalities" (MacLean 1978: 309-310).

Koestler was to write of the "violent abuse" he suffered from the scientific community, who attacked his concluding suggestion of a biochemical cure to resolve the predicament of man rather than the diagnosis that occupied 330 of the 339 pages¹⁵. Of course, "The Swinging Sixties" were at their height and Koestler could hardly have asked reviewers, sent copies of the book with a red heart-shaped "peace pill" and the question "If there were a 'peace' pill...would you take it?" (Toulmin 1977: 169), to play down the latest theoretical arrival on the Sixties drug scene. Almost inevitably, comparisons were struck between Koestler and the Sixties cult hero, Timothy Leary.

"The claims made for this imaginary pill are oddly like those Leary makes for LSD, and the arguments against them are the same - that a pharmaceutical millennium would only threaten our capacity for moral and intellectual judgment, and accelerate our return to the world of *Darkness at Noon*." (Toulmin 1977: 169)

One is reminded of the similarly weak ending to the second *Yogi*... essay: there must be more to re-establishing the "umbilical cord" than simply teaching meditation in schools. Similarly, could pharmacology truly provide an answer to the "misfitted brain" that dimmed man's spiritual vision? But if the "peace pill" spawned a lengthy and sometimes trivial debate in the newspaper correspondence columns, the need for such a radical solution should not be forgotten.

Enforcing happiness by psychopharmacological or any other means was doomed to failure - and surely Koestler knew that. He had said as much in *Twilight Bar*. But why were the planet's inhabitants in his early play so violent and miserable? Koestler claimed that he had found the reason for "the predicament of man"; the strength of his argument need not be lost simply because his *solution* for man's predicament was so spurious. And, of course, by equating the flaw in man's moral and spiritual nature with a flaw in the evolution of one of his organs,

¹⁵See the manuscript notes for the Preface to the Danube edition of *The ...* in which Koestler wrote of "touch[ing] a vital nerve - which in fact its purpose" (original manuscript version, later amended) MS 2326/1.

Koestler could now argue that the "misfitted brain" was a universal problem, and one that need not be recognised as such by the inheritors, in each successive generation, of the un-coordinated human triune brain. It is something each of us has to live with. In effect, Koestler was putting forward a twentieth century model of original sin¹⁶.

To this scientific work, one must also add Koestler's defence on Lamarckism and Koestler's evolutionary philosophy, equally applicable to his ethics as to his scientific work, which reached its apotheosis with *The Case of the Midwife Toad* (Koestler 1971b) and its attempt to rehabilitate Paul Kammerer. The list of critics of Koestlerian evolutionary theory is impressive: Cotterill - who negated Koestler's *The Ghost...* with his own title (Cotterill 1989); Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of DNA (Crick 1994), Dawkins and, explicitly repudiating Koestler's work, Stephen Jay Gould (Gould 1980; Gould 1991) who has offered a Darwinian interpretation of the *Alytes* experiments.

Let us be clear what is at stake here. It is not the matter of whether Kammerer had or had not succeeded in proving Lamarckian evolution - I myself have found in the Archive evidence, in a letter Koestler received only three months before writing his own suicide note, that points to the *Alytes* specimens being faked¹⁷. Rather, Koestler was at pains to champion an evolutionary theory that would add weight to his model of mental and ethical evolution put forward in *The Sleepwalkers*. Stephen Jay Gould admits that using a Lamarckian model for cultural or ethical evolution is perfectly feasible.

"[Lamarckism] is the mode of "inheritance" for another and very different kind of "evolution" - human cultural evolution. *Homo sapiens* arose at least 50,000 years ago, and we have not a shred of evidence for any genetic improvement since then...From perhaps

¹⁶Koestler had made the theological analogy himself as early as 1954 in notes for the American radio interview with Ed Morrow. q.v. Figure 2, p. above.

¹⁷As the subject may be important to biologists, I will let the final rest with Peter Huppert, whose letter to Koestler, written shortly after Paul Kammerer's (Paul Kammerer's daughter's) death, may be of some interest to historians of science. "Curiously enough she regarded it as perfectly plausible that Paul had doctored the fatal specimen himself - he was just an able prankster." (MS 2394/1)

one hundred thousand people with axes to more than four billion with bombs, rocket ships, cities, televisions and computers - and all without substantial genetic change." (Gould 1980: 70-71)

In other words, spiritual insight or the "non-quantitative moral values" of a Peter Slavek or Richard Hillary may be transmitted from one generation to another and built upon in the process. Lamarckism gives the sense of purpose that is at the heart of Koestler's ethics from the ethical novels onwards, and is a legitimate scientific model to adopt for this purpose outside its anatomical context.

Koestler as a theologian

Gould's critique of Koestler (Gould 1980: 68-71) centres upon a possible *Darwinian* explanation for Kammerer's experiments. But Gould goes on to discuss *why* a Lamarckian interpretation of this work held such powerful appeal for Koestler.

"[Lamarckism's appeal] lies in its offer of some comfort against a universe devoid of intrinsic meaning in our lives. It reinforces two of our deepest prejudices - our belief that effort should be rewarded and our hope for an inherently purposeful and progressive world. Its appeal for Koestler...lies more with this solace than in any technical argument about heredity...Darwinism compels us to seek meaning elsewhere - and isn't this what art, music, literature, ethical theory, personal struggle and Koestlerian humanism are all about?" (Gould 1980: 70)

Gould's analysis is a useful reminder that for Koestler the "technical arguments" of empirical science were secondary to his belief in an "inherently purposeful" world. In other words, Gould has elucidated the relationship between Koestler's science and his theology - the former serves the latter.

But I venture to suggest that Gould has misinterpreted Koestler in labelling his philosophy as humanist. If Koestler's hierarchy did not contain a Third Order, Gould's thesis would be vindicated. But as I have shown, spiritual reality and its interaction with humanity played a primary role in shaping Koestler's ethics, from his earliest novels to the *Janus* trilogy. Such an interaction might caution us against the term 'humanist', at least without some qualification, to Koestler's hierarchical system.

Toulmin, like Gould, perceives Koestler's science as merely a tool by

which to support a teleological view of creation (Toulmin 1979). Hence, *The Sleepwalkers* is seen as an argument for scientists guided like sleepwalkers "by some 'eye' inaccessible to conscious criticism" (Toulmin 1979: 47). The *Janus* trilogy is proof of this teleology, according to Toulmin: behind the arguments against behaviourism and evolution lies an essentially philosophical view of the world that abhorred "any suggestion of randomness, or chance, or indeterminacy" (Toulmin 1979: 53). Certainly, *The Roots of Coincidence* seems to confirm Toulmin's thesis: even coincidences to Koestler are *meaningful* coincidences (Koestler 1972)! If there is purpose in creation, beyond the happenstance of Darwinism, then one is immediately forced to ask theological questions. Toulmin sees no reason therefore not to discuss Koestler as a theologian, entitling his thesis "Arthur Koestler's theodicy on Sin, Science and Politics".

In an interesting parallel, Toulmin suggests that Koestler was born into a world as threatened by conflict as that into which Leibnitz was born, where young intellectuals dreamed of creating an alternative system of world order on a rational basis. Marxism was one such alternative. Its failure to Koestler was a breakdown of "cosmopolis", a failure of human beings to harmonise with the *logos* of nature. In Toulmin's memorable summing up,

"If it had not been for this psychic deficiency, the God need not have failed, the Noon would not have been filled with Darkness, the Night might not have been quite so full of Thieves." (Toulmin 1979: 56)

Toulmin was the first Koestlerian critic to equate sin with cerebral inadequacy, though he is less than happy with the solution at the end of the *Janus* works. "He comes...to bring us not Grace, but a Pill." Herein lies the reason for labelling Koestler a humanist: the answer to man's problems lies with us, rather than a divine being.

But so integral is the "psychic deficiency", it is difficult to accept that Koestler ever truly believed in a chemical answer to the human predicament. And whilst Koestler remained a pessimist as far as human nature is concerned, one should not simply ignore those occasions when his characters encountered a spiritual reality and the ennobling and uplifting actions that inevitably followed. There really is very

little point in Toulmin speculating on whether or not the God of Marxism would have failed a properly 'integrated' Koestler. Besides, Koestler's work on Kepler, and the comparisons that can be drawn between him and Rubashov, had at the very least revealed the presence of a "psychic efficiency" in the sense that the human brain could just as easily find itself drawn upwards to the Third Order as downward towards social disintegration. That is the Janus Principle in a nutshell.

"Facing upward or inward, towards that unattainable core from which my decisions seem to emanate, I feel free. Facing the other way, there is the robot - or the beast." (Koestler 1967: 217)

What Toulmin sees as entirely negative is (typically for Koestler) both positive and negative: an inbuilt tendency towards irrationality countered by the bestial remnant within the Koestler-MacLean brain.

Of course, the question remains whether or not there is a God at the top of the Koestlerian hierarchy; for the moment, suffice to say that such a God would be, to Koestler, beyond rational thought. However, the very fact that science to Koestler was never an end in itself but simply a means by which purpose and a higher reality could be expressed, and rationality subsumed into a hierarchical system, indicates that Koestler was primarily a theological rather than scientific thinker.

Toulmin's main criticism of Koestler, like that of Gould, was that Koestler could not be happy with the purposeless random world in which he lived. Laurence Chamales, on the other hand, in an important contribution to Koestlerian scholarship, argues that such restlessness is typical of the present century (Chamales 1973). "Arthur Koestler is a vivid example of modern man in search of transcendence or myth" (Chamales 1973: 1). Like Toulmin, Chamales paints a picture of Koestler as a theological thinker.

For example, Koestler's early interest in science is, according to Chamales, only a lever to a more profound "spiritual curiosity" (Chamales 1973: 2). Significantly, Chamales argues that God did not satisfy his spiritual yearnings, presumably for the very reason I have already outlined: namely, that the kind of God invoked by theologians was too precise and *rational* to fit into Koestler's irrational and

hierarchical theodicy. This would certainly fit in with the "lovers' quarrel with God" argument contained in the *Icarus* scripts. The "lovers' quarrel" was with a theologically defined Anglican God, rather than, say, Anselm's being at the top of a spiritual hierarchy, "that, than which nothing greater can be conceived".

"One has to wonder if Koestler was born in a different age, would he have become a religious fanatic or a saint that worshipped God with great emotional zeal?" (Chamales 1973: 3)

Chamales implies that the scientific world-view militated against that: yet Koestler demonstrated he was by no means averse to challenging the rational scientific world-view! Chamales thus concludes that Koestler's search for transcendence was bound to fail, although his life was spent attempting to satisfy his spiritual leanings. This is hardly an original thesis: Carlet had proposed a similar scenario ten years previously; Goldstein would repeat the argument in her doctoral dissertation in 1992. The evidence put forward has remained much the same: the appeal of Marxism to the young Koestler because of the need to sacrifice oneself to the Communist *hierarchy* (Chamales 1973: 14); the spiritual freedom Communism thus represented; the post-Communist Koestler "viewing himself as a neurotic rebel trying to cause joy in heaven" (Chamales 1973: 17) and demonstrating an overwhelming need to unite polar opposites (knowing/unknowing and faith/reason) into a harmonious whole. So Chamales reaches his conclusion that

"Koestler's work ethic is only a symbol of a twentieth century intellectual man who has searched for the spiritual feeling of transcendence *and has found little.*" (my italics) (Chamales 1973: 35-36)

But Chamales goes further than Carlet and Goldstein. For he suggests that work, combined with his probing of the unknown, *has become Koestler's religion.*

If one then applies this interpretation of Koestler's theology, ultimately godless with at its heart little more than a work ethic, to the twentieth century world in general, one inevitably arrives at a spiritually barren and hopeless picture of the world. This indeed is the picture Chamales paints. Consciously, twentieth century man must acknowledge he has only human resources. Unconsciously, still the need to fill the spiritual void remains.

"Koestler symbolises the dilemma of an intellectual; man wanting to logically shape his own life yet feeling compelled to submit to a higher order of system." (Chamales 1973: 24)

However, one would have to ask whether such an interpretation can be reconciled with the irrational ethics of Rubashov or Slavek. Does Rubashov rely purely on "human resources" at the point of his self-sacrifice? Is the Grammatical Fiction merely a further human resource? Again, one thinks of Koestler's suicide note and the admission that it was "the oceanic sense" - Koestler's Freudian phrase he used as a substitute for his experience of the Third Order¹⁸ - that sustained him "at difficult moments, and does so now, while I am writing this". However else one interprets this "oceanic sense", it is difficult to view it as another human resource.

One must never forget that Koestler's theology, expressed admittedly in scientific terms or in fictional scenarios, began autobiographically in a Spanish jail with a man who thought he was sentenced to death suddenly undergoing a mystical experience of infinity. Such mysticism does not lend itself to a systematic theology or an easy definition of God.

But in my opinion Koestler's life-long interest in the Third Order, and the manner in which it shaped his ethics, is reasonable evidence that Koestler was, above all, a spiritual thinker. His spirituality was as open-ended as his hierarchy. If there is no apex to Koestler's hierarchy, as philosophers have suggested (Hausman 1966, Toulmin 1979) then we could hardly expect a conclusive final definition of deity.

Koestler's continued reluctance to express belief in God in unambiguous terms makes it all too easy for scholars such as Chamales and Goldstein to argue that his religious quest was futile. But Rubashov awaiting execution, Koestler in his prison cell in Seville, Hillary returning to flying for the sake of his dead comrades, Peter Slavek making a conscious decision to risk his life in the war and Hydie returning to her childhood mysticism and rejecting Fedya's

¹⁸Referring to his experience of the Third Order, Koestler noted "It is process of dissolution and limitless expansion which is sensed as the 'oceanic feeling' ... the peace that passeth all understanding" (Koestler 1954a:

advances, may want to argue that human resources were not the key to understanding their ethics or their actions. For them, the religious quest was not futile, though admittedly it was not expressed in religious language. Koestler's spiritual struggle was one that expressed itself more obliquely, through the self-sacrificing and visionary exploits of sleepwalkers in tune with a higher, but ultimately unnamed, reality.

The concept of personhood

One might well be entitled to ask that if, in the open-ended hierarchy, there is no end in sight to the religious quest - and no end beyond sight either - what is the point of seeking the "oceanic sense" of Third Order reality?

The answer is, according to Koestler, one becomes a more complete person.

Central to Koestler's hierarchical ethics is the concept of personhood, a term one normally associates with Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge*. Nevertheless, the idea that as one ascends, however haphazardly, the different levels of the hierarchy one becomes a more whole or integrated person is apparent in the ethical novels. Thus, Slavek is a more whole person than Sonia, Rubashov more balanced than his interrogators and so on.

Scott has illustrated the concept of personhood by citing the example of the deformed daughter in *A Child Possessed* (Hutchinson 1977). In his novel, Hutchinson plots the course of a father's relationship with "a child so dreadfully deformed in mind and body as to be scarcely human" (Scott 1985: 159). Doctors assure the father that talk of personality in this case is not appropriate, and the girl should be allowed to die. The father is unimpressed by their line of argument and takes the daughter home.

If Hutchinson's exploration of personhood is familiar, it is precisely because the relationship between a man and a deformed child is at the very centre of *Arrival and Departure II*, which preceded Polanyi's Gifford Lecture on personhood by several years. In the

surviving manuscript and typescript, Father Zlatko sees the grotesque figure of young David as a real person needing care and love. But this is not the perception of Peter, who initially reacts to the sight of David *in horror*: "such a *thing* should not be allowed to live" (my italics). But Peter is viewing David from a different level in the ethical hierarchy, for Koestler explicitly states at the outset in the "grace had been withdrawn" passage that Peter's communion with the Grammatical Fiction had been temporarily lost. The contrasting perceptions of David by two figures, bound together by the same cause yet at separate stages of ethical development, is one of the most enduring images of *Arrival and Departure II*.

Koestler returned to the theme of personhood in his television screenplay, *The Fall of Dr Icarus*. It would be tempting to read into the change from the impersonal "Case One" and "Case Two" to the *named* characters of later versions of the script that Koestler too was ascending his own ethical hierarchy and becoming a more whole person under the settling influence of Cynthia Jefferies. Whilst that may be overstating the case, it is possible that Koestler emphasises Dr Icarus' immaturity by his consistent attitude towards his patients as mere "cases" - indeed, Icarus' own son believes that he is being treated by his father in precisely the same manner. Koestler's contempt of "ratomorphic" psychology and Freudianism is barely concealed in *Dr Icarus*.

But the reason for Koestler's contempt of scientific determinism is, I believe, directly related to his insistence that integrated human beings, and integrated societies, have respect for human life as something other than the summation of cells or chemicals: Koestler's "I love, therefore I am" scrawled in pencil on the cover of the typescript to *Arrival and Departure II*. "The sum total of these conditioned reflexes is called the Battle of Britain" Felix sarcastically replies to Icarus' "diagnosis" of his son's desire to become a fighter pilot like Hillary (MS 2325/4: 35). Icarus' perception of the war as precisely that is as horrific in its own way as Peter's reaction to the grotesque David as "a thing". The scientific determinist, like the (temporarily) self-centred Peter, denies the concept of personhood

which relies upon a spiritual as much as a physical perception of life.

So I would argue that personhood, a central tenet of hierarchical ethics, takes us back to a spiritual reading of Koestler's ethical system. Torrance alights on Polanyi's use of the concept to emphasise the centrality of "belief or intuitive apprehension" (Torrance 1980: 9) in attaining the integrated personhood that is the desired goal in Polanyi's own ethical system. But this is equally applicable of Koestler.

"I do believe that one can suddenly 'see the light' and undergo a change that will completely alter the course of one's life. But a change of this kind takes place at the spiritual core of the subject, and it will take a long time to seep through to the periphery until in the end the entire personality, his conscious thoughts and actions, become impregnated with it...Nor do I believe that a true spiritual transformation can be the result of a process of rational reasoning...the intellectual re-furnishing comes afterwards." (Koestler 1954a: 357)

In every novel one looks at, one cannot find a single example of a character who behaves in a whole or integrated manner without first undergoing a fundamental change of heart, a *metanoia* in which the awareness of spiritual reality plays a critical role.

The relevance of Koestler for today

At the "Meeting to Honour the Memory of Arthur Koestler and Cynthia Koestler" at the Royal Academy of Arts on 7 April 1983, Harold Harris read to the invited guests five passages of Arthur Koestler's work, ranging from *Arrow in the Blue* to the Epilogue of *Bricks to Babel*. The selection, as one would expect from a close friend, was both succinct and perceptive. The common factor behind all the readings was the centrality of Koestler's grasp of pararational faith¹⁹ and his experience and awareness of spiritual reality, from his mystic elation of infinity at the age of 14 to his final writings.

Such a perception of Koestler's life work was shared by the most distinguished of obituary writers. Anthony Burgess chose to remember

¹⁹The most notable example of this was Koestler's quotation from Pope's "The Christian to his Soul" in his preface to the Voluntary Euthanasia Society's *Guide to Self-Deliverance*.

Koestler in terms of a quest, not for knowledge but for faith.

"He began with a Utopian faith and saw it dissolved in the salt mines. He ended not by turning to organised religion but by struggling - always struggling - to find answers." (Burgess 1983)

George Steiner, meanwhile, noted that there was nothing very unusual in Koestler's mystical experience in Spain. "What was unusual was the direction in which this epiphany impelled Koestler's work" (Steiner 1983). One could put it another way by saying that Koestler's life journey was a twentieth century reinterpretation of Anselm's *fides quaerens intellectum*.

Two ethical issues come to mind as ones which Koestler drew upon his perception of Third Order reality to bring about what was, as he saw, a fuller understanding of the ethical issue as a result. The two issues were capital punishment (as discussed in Chapter 3) and euthanasia, a late application of his hierarchical ethics (thus outside the scope of this thesis). But such details, whilst they may be argued as evidence for Koestler's relevance, are, in my opinion, secondary to Koestler's broader contribution to ethics. That appeal lies in the working model he proposed in order to better understand the world and evaluate our moral values. The model is based on a perception of spiritual reality that is so intrinsically linked to human evolution as to be universal.

It is a model that will not necessarily appeal to Christians, for the simple reason that it does not demand a specifically Christian experience. I believe that what Koestler did was to take the concept of revelation from a Christian context to a more general context.

Revelation may seem a strong word to apply to Koestler's characters - yet in what other terms can one describe the dramatic insight that Rubashov gained from the Grammatical Fiction?²⁰ Of those readers of *Darkness*...who corresponded with its author, several imposed their own

²⁰The word is probably first applied to Koestler's work by Rebecca West, traces Koestler's ethical interest to "part of the revelation he had lived in prison" (West 1977: 89). West was one of the first of many critics in the 1950s who suggested that Koestler found a "peaceful ecstasy" or fulfilment in prison following the self-revelation of the fallacy of his Marxist past. Other, notably Deutscher (Deutscher 1977), saw such a revelation as merely a confusion of intellect and emotion and argued that Koestler, like many ex-Communists, had a characteristic incapacity for objective analysis.

Christological interpretation on the book. What of the portrait that Rubashov glimpses just before he is shot? "Several of us think it's Christ" (MS 2378/3: 111-112²¹). The point is that it is not necessary, of even desirable, to equate the Grammatical Fiction with some kind of Christian revelation.

One advantage of Koestler's system - though it would be almost stretching the definition too far to apply the word system to Koestler's metatheory - is that it cannot be restricted to any one religion or group. Koestler invites the reader to undergo his own journey of revelation and spiritual perception but without the restrictive baggage of a specific religion or theology. And of course for those who distrust theological terms such as sin, Koestler's schizophysiology thesis succeeds, in my view, in emphasising the seriousness and universality of our flawed nature whilst still offering a way out to those who look beyond "human resources" (Chamales' phrase) to the Third Order for purpose and a sense of peace. There is no room for Darwinian triumphalism, the "survival of the fittest".

Nor is Koestler's Third Order-influenced ethics based on theory. Whatever else can be said of Koestler's hierarchy, it remained primarily experiential. I hope I have presented enough evidence in the first three chapters to demonstrate that every refinement and change to Koestler's ethical hierarchy was precipitated by either a personal experience or the observation of close friends such as Hillary. It is fundamentally a journey that Koestler invites us actively to undertake rather than a static philosophy passively to accept.

That flaws exist in Koestler's system there can be no doubt. The synthesis between saint and revolutionary is never quite spelt out and the method by which rationalism can be subsumed into a larger world-view, and man thus move up the ethical hierarchy, remains vague. In *The Yogi...*, Koestler had promised a movement that "will re-establish the disturbed balance between rational and spiritual values", a new age with new ethical values, the exact properties of which cannot be

²¹Koestler refuses to accept such a limited interpretation of his best novel. Replying to George Gillespie, Koestler said the portrait in question was that of Hitler! (MS 2379/1: 90)

formulated from the lower level in which we now live (Koestler 1945a: 106-112). The lack of method frustrated readers more than once.

"As Christ promised the kingdom to the poor, the humble and the meek, so you expect this new movement to rise 'from the ranks of the poor'. How, Mr Koestler, please How?" (MS 2374/3: 66)

Koestler himself later summed up this primary flaw of his metatheory.

"A great many people, myself included,...agree...that a synthesis of science and religion, of emotional intellect, is indispensable if our civilisation is to survive. But the question is how to achieve the aim." (MS 2377/1: 167)

There is also the nagging suspicion, openly aired recently by Avishai, that the kind of spiritual perception which set Koestler upon the beginning of his spiritual journey did not seem to bear fruit in his own life.

"It is very hard, though not impossible, perhaps, to reconcile Koestler's notion of the absolute with Cynthia's suicide. It is impossible to square this with her devotion, as described by Harold Harris." (Avishai 1997: 39)

Assuming that the lack of a "new movement" leaves us forced to examine Koestler's ethics on an individualistic plane, Avishai legitimately asks whether Koestler's transcendent ethic proved "too sublime to be of use to him, or to Cynthia, not only at the end, but during their many years together". Avishai leaves the question unanswered. For my part, I would offer two thoughts on the usefulness of Koestler's ethics. Koestler is not the first, and will certainly not be the last, to propose a system of ethics that is perceived as at odds with his private life. Secondly, Avishai's analysis fails to identify another important flaw in Koestler's ethics: the randomness of our encounters with a higher reality and the disturbing ease with which we can move lower down, rather than higher up, the ethical hierarchy. (Witness Peter Slavek at the beginning of the sequel to *Arrival and Departure* and the "grace withdrawn" episode.)

A detailed analysis of randomness in Koestler's system has been provided by Hausman, using as his primary text *The Act of Creation* (Hausman 1966). Essentially, Hausman states that bisociation depends upon two random events occurring simultaneously.

"Koestler's attempt to construct what he believes to be a scientifically based theory thus reaches its limit in the appeal to chance. And in thus reaching the limit, the theory also denies

the possibility...of fitting bisociation into a complete determinism. Moreover, it is the admission of chance which leaves open to Koestler the opportunity to indulge his poetic, metaphorical and more speculative considerations of creative activity." (Hausman 1966: 99)

Peter Slavek could not dictate the moment for the acceptance or withdrawal of grace - such things, being bisociative, were beyond his control. It is reasonable to conclude that a journey dictated by random events can hardly be called, to use Avishai's term, "sublime". It is, however, realistic.

It is also dynamic. Koestler appeals to the restless spirit, the seeker. Augustine's "our heart cannot rest until it finds rest in you" becomes to Koestler "our heart cannot rest". Nevertheless, the possibility is there for each of us to gain, through spiritual perception, a better understanding of the world in which we move. Thus we move up (or down) the Koestlerian hierarchy, with guilt as our moral spur and the Grammatical Fiction as an unpredictable companion.

But how are we to view those at other stages of the spiritual journey? Koestler makes us aware of the problems posed by differing hierarchical values. At the core of the Yogi-Commissar problem lies the problem of communication, the lack of understanding between the Rubashovs and Gletkins, the Fedyas and Hydies (the Arthurs and Cynthias?). In his Sonning Prize Address in 1968 (Koestler 1981: 123-136), Koestler suggested that language is "perhaps the main reason" why the downward pull is stronger than the upward pull in the ethical hierarchy. The Yogi does not share the same vocabulary as the Commissar.

"...language, instead of counteracting intraspecific tensions and fratricidal tendencies, enhances their virulence. It is a grotesque paradox that we have communication satellites which can make a message visible and audible over the whole planet, but no planetwide language to make it also understandable." (Koestler 1981: 134)

Again, the diagnosis; again, the lack of a cure. Nevertheless, by drawing attention to the difficulties of specific languages within the spectrum of human religions and ideologies, Koestler offers a timely reminder of the importance of locating a *lingua franca* accessible to Yogi and Commissar. Hence this reaction of Trevor Huddleston, whom

Koestler met during the anti-hanging campaign (MS 2380/3: 174), to *The Sleepwalkers*:

"Arthur Koestler has written a book which should be read most of all by those whose vocation is the proclaiming of Christian truth...it ought to find a place on the bookshelf of every bishop, priest, minister, and teacher who is at all concerned with the question of *communicating* his beliefs to the modern world." (author's italics) (Huddleston 1959)

At the very least, here is an ethical model that pays attention to the existence of boundaries of language and understanding across cultures. In practical terms, these are the problems addressed by Amnesty and its forerunner, the Koestler-Orwell-Gollancz League of 1946. In theoretical terms, we can also learn from Koestler's careful use of scientific and literary analogy to make his metatheory understood by as wide an audience as possible. Koestler's "sole aim" for the creation of an "ethical consensus" (Goldstein 1992: 284) deserves to be considered up by others. Or, as Huddleston concluded after reading Koestler, we need to think, so far as maybe, in each other's categories.

Throughout his life Koestler wrestled with the attractions of Yogi-ethics. It is easy to denigrate the place or worth of an individual, to uphold the Benthamite ethic of the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Koestler at times appears as the champion of an individual ethic. Human life is sacred and no human being should be used as a means to any other person's end. His characters, as often as not, acquit themselves with dignity and respect for others in acts of supreme self-sacrifice.

But we must also remember Koestler's own wariness of the Yogi.

"Perhaps the solution was to be found in a reversal of Bentham's maxim: - the least suffering for the smallest number. It sounded attractive - up to a point. But beyond that point lay quietism, stagnation and resignation." (Koestler 1954a: 358)

After all, in the last word to the ethical trilogy, the synopsis to the unfinished *Arrival and Departure II*, the Yogi-figure is seen as more of a temptation than a solution to Peter's crisis.

Yet what Koestler has in common with personalist ethicists is the understanding, in a world of neoDarwinian chance evolution, of man's spirit and uniqueness: literally the ghost in the machine, with a firm

division between the human species and the rest of the animal kingdom. The insights of other scientists, particularly Michael Polanyi, have lent themselves to theological interpretation (Torrance 1975, 1980). Yet theologians remain apparently distrustful or ignorant of Koestler, in spite of his insistence on the unique creative nature and the unique sinfulness of man caused by his triune brain. Huddleston's plea has gone largely unheeded.

Koestler also calls us to look afresh at the relationship between science and religion. According to Koestler, the one needs the other. Certainly, his insistent call for an irrational science, demonstrated historically in *The Sleepwalkers*, suggests that the two are closer to one another than is commonly realised. Even thirty years ago, the discoveries of particle physics had called into question the concept of a materialistic predictive view of the universe. What I would call Koestler's "quantum ethics", in which the characters are as unpredictable as their sub-atomic components, and who move between separate levels of an ethical hierarchy with sudden bursts of energy, is a perfectly reasonable model for us to take into the next century. It is as "reason-able", at any rate, as sub-atomic physics.

The model is based, therefore, on revolution rather than evolution. Gradual progress is not a concept assimilated into Koestler's hierarchy. Ethical Lamarckism may account for the means by which the lessons of a sleepwalker are passed from one generation to another; but the path of man's so-called 'progress' remains a haphazard and zig-zag path due to the conspiring factors of chance and the unique inheritance of the triune brain. Yet the hierarchical model may account for the sudden shifts in twentieth century society: the appeal and dramatic rise of Commissar-ethics as expressed in Stalinism and Nazism, the subsequent shift to the opposite end of the spectrum, the popularity of Yogi-figures such as Gandhi, and so on. Evolutionary models, such as Julian Huxley's "evolutionary ethics" (Toulmin 1977: 169) on the other hand, are arguably ill-equipped to cope with such sudden shifts of thought, nor do they satisfactorily resolve the question of the lack of apparent progress in ethics since the dawn of civilisation.

"...there is the striking, symptomatic disparity between the growth curves of technological achievement on the one hand and of

ethical behaviour on the other...In the sixth century BC the Greeks embarked on the scientific adventure which, a few months ago, landed us on the moon. But the sixth century BC also saw the birth of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism; the twentieth of Stalinism, Hitlerism and Maoism. There is no discernible curve." (Koestler 1981: 126)

The hierarchical model, for all its randomness, has proved to be remarkably predictive in the very society that gave rise to Koestler's anti-deterministic crusade: Communism. "The Shadow of A Tree" (Koestler 1955: 151-176) is an uncannily accurate description of the collapse of Communism and the first free elections in post-Soviet Russia. Nor was this piece of "science-fiction" a hit-and-miss case of one prediction among many coming right. The collapse of Communism was perfectly predictable given the model for Third Order-influenced ethics that Koestler had put forward. "Religion...remained alive with the people" (Koestler 1955: 159). Communism, in its later years, only existed among people outside Russia - an observation Koestler made in 1951. The strength and resilience of that part of man's spirit which connects him to the universe (for that is how Koestler phrased it), which Koestler had experienced for himself, is greater than any single system. And Koestler was to turn to empirical science to illustrate his argument.

But Koestler's subsequent failure to systematise his ethics and arrive at a method by which bisociation might be more properly controlled is in itself a failure from which we can still learn. The irreducibility of ethical values was a notion that Sonia Bolgar had to learn from Peter's irrational behaviour - and perhaps Koestler, too, in *Icarus*, had to accept that the self-sacrifice of Hillary was not a subject for empirical investigation. Koestler presents us with a scientific dystopia: from *dissociation* of language, goals and morals, we hunger for bisociation.

Most importantly, Koestler leaves us with a mystery that should not rather than cannot be explained. Human ideas of God and standards of morals rely not on a logical progression but on a revolutionary and, disquietingly, random process of insight and imagination. Polanyi incorporated such empirically hostile notions into science; Maslow achieved something similar in psychology. Is it not possible that Koestler could achieve this for ethics?

Nevertheless, let us not read too much into Koestler's hierarchy: God remained absent by name, the hierarchy open-ended. All that Koestler asked was that the appropriate response to man's twentieth century predicament had to take into account a perception of a higher order of reality. Ethics, therefore, needed to be influenced by the Third Order, and that requires insight. Perhaps, however, it does not require God, for spiritual reality arguably stands in Koestler's system without the need of a specific deity, Christian or otherwise. After all, he wrote "a genuine mystic experience may mediate a *bona fide* conversion to practically any creed, Christianity, Buddhism, or Fire-Worship" (Koestler 1954a: 353).

That the kind of ethical values Koestler's fictional heroes demonstrated might remain beyond analysis will be difficult to accept in a rational world or in theological systems that often leave little room for sleepwalkers stumbling across a great mystery. But our mysterious and random encounters with the Third Order cannot be discounted; they lie at the very centre of Koestlerian ethics.

Orwell offered us one picture of the future. In his thesis of a revolution betrayed, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the triumphant O'Brien submits a picture of the future as "a boot stamping on a human face - for ever" (Orwell 1954: 215). Koestler provides a life-affirming, indeed life-enhancing, alternative in which our humanity is fully realised by incorporating into our lives a perception of a spiritual reality. It is a picture of potential human creativity and love that is as mysterious as it is profound. In Koestler's world, to borrow Shelden's imagery, there is time for things which have no power associated with them, things not meant to assert someone's will over someone else; time for wandering among old churchyards and making the perfect cup of tea and balancing caterpillars on a stick and falling in love. This is the reaction Koestler educes in his readers.

"I continue to enjoy your book [*The Age of Longing*] immensely. I have begun to feel an enrichment, a surrounding as it were of this world in which Fedya and the girl...move, so that it is difficult when I wake up in the morning...for a minute or two to recognise the world of schedules and trains to be taken and newspapers to read." (MS 2377/1: 21)

Such things cannot be analysed or reduced to physiological components;

but that does not detract from their reality. We are enriched by our surprising encounters with the Third Order; and they leave an indelible mark upon our behaviour. Koestler's struggle was to attempt to incorporate such mysteries into an ethical system that is both descriptive and predictive of human behaviour.

"Prophet and poseur"?

If the starting-point of this thesis was Koestler's account of the "hours by the window" in Seville, then it is surely appropriate to conclude, as Koestler himself did in his published works, by a final reference to the significance of the Third Order. For Koestler's last published book, at least as far as new writing was concerned²², entitled *Janus: A Summing Up* is both a summary "and also a continuation" of his non-fictional work (Koestler 1979: author's note). And it is, in Koestler's terms, a journey that ends where it began in Seville.

"I shall conclude this book with a kind of credo, the origin of which dates some forty years back, to the Spanish Civil War. In 1937 I spent several months in the Nationalists' prison in Seville, as a suspected spy, threatened with execution. During that period, in solitary confinement, I had some experiences which seemed to me close to the mystics' 'oceanic feeling'...I called those experiences 'the hours by the window'. The extract which follows...reflects what one may call 'an agnostic's credo'. [Koestler then quotes the relevant passage from *The Invisible Writing*, Koestler 1954a: 353-354.] (Koestler 1979: 285-286)

Appendices apart, these are the last words of Koestler's final new published work. Koestler, it seems, wishes his readers to take leave of him with the 'agnostic's credo' as a conclusion to his journey.

Thus, if the hierarchical model that Koestler had attempted to describe over a period of forty years was, as I hope to have demonstrated, the direct outcome of "the hours by the window", Koestler's own spirituality, can be traced to this same experience. The charge that can be levelled against Koestler, and indeed against my

²²The later *Kaleidoscope* (Koestler 1981) amounts to an anthology of his previously published work, drawn largely from *Drinkers of Infinity* and *The Odyssey of Achilles*.

thesis, is that Koestler was the type of man who needed to find purpose and meaning in one creed or another, and if the god of Communism failed him, he would read into the world a higher, spiritual, order of reality that would alone give meaning to both the world and, more pertinently, his own experiences. This is essentially the view of Toulmin: Koestler invents spirituality as a convenient peg upon which to hang his crusading zeal.

If one equates spirituality with the figure of the Yogi, then such a criticism is, at least in part, valid. And of course it is necessary for Koestler to side with the Yogi, at least temporarily, in order to counteract the attractions of the Commissar.

"Utilitarianism and pragmatism were the real targets of our protests. To think, as Bentham did, that the worth of human action is determined by its utility or expediency, is to open the way to the suffering of countless millions...Our 'strangled' cry was simply uttered against the idea that ends justify means...So I think it would be quite unfair to accuse us, ex-Communists, of becoming figures out of Dostoevsky's novels, singing Gregorian hymns into our beards." (Koestler 1968a: 286)

Even such a parodied view of spirituality had its attractions when the "nightly, muffled 'madres' and 'socorros' rang in the ears of Koestler, the prisoner under (or so he thought) the sentence of death. But spirituality to Koestler was much more than simply the "warm protective womb of faith" he struggled against in Seville (Koestler 1954a: 353) or the prerogative of a Dostoevskian monk. If one took spirituality to mean the awareness of a higher order of reality, then it was possible, or so Koestler believed, to be both prophet and poseur of the kind that had once irritated him²³. In other words, the dualism of Koestler the rationalist and Koestler the spiritual thinker can, I suggest, cope with what we read in Koestler and what we know of him.

What one should not do is assume that for Koestler the spiritual struggle ever reached a conclusion - or, for that matter, a climax. "This is a story without a climax" he had warned later readers of *Dialogue*... (Koestler 1954b: 208). That remained true of his later life. He returned from India and Japan as disillusioned with Eastern

²³See Koestler's essay on Andre Malraux, "Prophet and poseur". (Koestler 166-169).

mysticism as he had once been with Communism. The only wisdom he had acquired, he said, was the childishly simple lesson that one should never ask yourself whether a "holy man" is a saint or a phoney, but "try to draw a balance sheet of the amounts of saintliness and phoneyess in him" (Koestler 1968a: 169). The journey and the spiritual struggle, I believe, continued.

If the balance sheet of this thesis weighs too heavily in favour of Koestler the spiritual thinker, it is partly because Koestler the *humanist* has had much written on that side of the balance sheet. One could argue that the campaign for the abolition of hanging, the novels and the 1946 League may still be seen within the framework of Koestler's humanism, although from his own handwritten note, one would surely have to modify this to *sceptical* humanism (Figure 1). I hope that I have demonstrated, however, that the evidence of Koestler's spirituality permeating these works deserves attention. And if one can accept a dualist view of Koestler the prophet and poseur, perhaps there is room for both.

In any case, spirituality for Koestler was not a question of one's personal experience nor was it the sole property of the Yogi. In his ethics, the influence of the Third Order led him to attempt to transcend the position of the Yogi and the Commissar. Neither the rational world nor the spiritual world was enough to save the world (note *the world*, not the individual) from man's self-destructive tendencies. His ethics, and also his spirituality, was an attempt at a synthesis of apparently opposing principles. I leave it to the reader to judge for himself whether he succeeded in reaching the synthesis towards which his life struggled.

POSTSCRIPT

Sir Dick White, who had attempted to recruit Koestler to Military Intelligence in the Second World War²⁴, remained fascinated both by Koestler and his masterpiece, *Darkness at Noon*, well into retirement.

"In his living room overlooking the garden he had created, White contemplated his old enemy - the communists. Occasionally he would re-read Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, fascinated by Gletkin, the chilling NKVD interrogator, an ambitious cog in Stalin's machinery of tyranny." (Bower 1995: 374)

On the last occasion when his biographer visited White in the autumn of 1992, Bower found the old man, then suffering from terminal cancer, re-reading *Darkness at Noon*.

Koestler's fictional creation of Gletkin was, in White's opinion, the biggest argument possible against the Soviet system. It is probably not surprising that that great novel should continue to occupy the thoughts of a man like Sir Dick White; for Gletkin was a deliberate embodiment of the spiritless and inhuman system that British intelligence, and White himself, had attempted to undermine. What is more interesting, however, is that as with Orwell's dystopic work, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the apparent passing of Gletkin's system has not diminished interest in the novel²⁵.

One recent reader of *Darkness...* was John Scripps, who in April 1996

²⁴Bower recently wrote that Koestler had responded to an informal offer to him by Dick White, head of British Military Intelligence, to work in his department during the war. "Over croquet he [White] asked Koestler, Schild and Hart to produce anti-Nazi propaganda 'to make Goebbels sit up'. (Bower 1995: 46). But White's idea broke up after a few weeks' squabbling. This researcher asked Bower to comment upon the source for this evidence supported by any material in the Koestler Archive I have seen), and its implications. Bower replied that the information was disclosed in an interview with White as the latter was dying of cancer. White was "intrigued by Koestler" (Bower, pers. comm.) and "wanted to use Koestler's brains, as he used Hart's". Whilst Bower uses this evidence to demonstrate the wide sphere of influence and ambitious plans of British intelligence in 1941, the fact remains that Koestler - even assuming such a conspicuous figure could ever be as a spy - responded negatively to White's grandiose scheme.

²⁵In 1991, the Penguin edition of *Darkness at Noon* sold over 4,000 copies - more than double any of Koestler's other works (MS 2467/1).

earned the dubious distinction of being the first Briton to be executed in Singapore since independence. Convicted of the murder of a South African tourist, *Darkness at Noon* was one of the last books Scripps read before being hanged in Changi Prison.

"Scripps has spent the last few months in jail writing letters and reading [*Darkness at Noon* and other requested books] in his small cell, where the light was kept on 24 hours a day and his movements were monitored by camera." (*The Times*, 19 April 1996)

One could not ask for a greater contrast to White in his English country garden than a semi-illiterate convicted murderer in a tiny prison cell reading the same book. Yet perhaps Scripps' predicament offers one final clue to the nature of all of Koestler's work, fictional and non-fictional. For it is just possible that Scripps came to *Darkness at Noon* not to rehearse or confirm anti-communist arguments but in a final attempt to gain some kind of autonomy and self-respect in a situation that depersonalised its subject. For that, rather than the Hearings between Rubashov and his interrogators, had also been the theme of *Darkness*... Rubashov, like Scripps after him, had been a condemned man yet through the spiritual experience of Third Order reality, expressed through his encounters with the Grammatical Fiction, he had found some sort of release in the moment of execution.

Indeed, perhaps Scripps and White, and every other modern reader of *Darkness at Noon* encountering Koestler's greatest work for the first time, are not as dissimilar as one might suppose. Faced with the prospect of imminent death, either from cancer or the hangman's noose, both may in fact have found inspiration and consolation from Rubashov's death and the "oceanic sense" that marked Rubashov's sacrifice of life.

Of course, we will never know whether or not Scripps ultimately did find himself sharing Rubashov's last glimpse of a higher, spiritual, reality. *Darkness*... is not a simple do-it-yourself spiritual guidebook, nor did its author ever claim it to be such. The haphazard nature of finding oneself encountering the reality of the Third Order remains.

Nevertheless, for all the haphazard and apparently random nature by which a spiritual reality might be revealed to Scripps, to White or to ourselves, I hope to have demonstrated in this thesis that the

principle of a spiritual reality directly affecting human behaviour when that reality is perceived lies at the heart of all of Koestler's work. That surely is the real strength behind *Darkness...* as much as the newly discovered and unpublished works such as *Arrival and Departure II* and *Dr Icarus*.

Third Order reality must be perceived before a complete and integrated working ethic can be undertaken. The ephemeral nature of that perception lies behind much of the failure of human ethics. In outlining his theory of the "misfitted brain", Koestler had attempted to give scientific credence to original sin. Conversely, Koestler had been aware that perception of the Third Order offered a solution to the Yogi-Commissar dilemma that focuses upon the centrality of the individual at the expense of society or vice versa. Such a solution had been apparent in the "hours by the window" in Seville; I hope this thesis has revealed that far from working out the implications of this experience by 1945, such a spiritual experience was the inspiration behind his new holistic system.

However elusive his actual experiences of a higher reality may have been, both at the time and retrospectively, I hope that the evidence I have shown demonstrates that, until the very end of his life, Koestler's work and life were determined by his experience and pursuit of the Third Order. This had provided him with the basis of his own ethical system and made him an intensely spiritual thinker. To acclaim Koestler as simply a humanist may be to oppose the dualist tensions reflected in the antithetical titles of his work and indeed the spiritual struggle that may never have been fully resolved. Let the final word rest with Koestler himself.

"I feel that this present account gives a far too tidy and logical description of a spiritual crisis with its constant ups and downs, advances and relapses; its oscillation between new certainties and old doubts; its sudden illuminations, followed by long periods of inner darkness, petty resentments and fear.. When I got out [of prison], the process continued. It had started at the unconscious foundations, but it took many years till it gradually altered the intellectual structure." (Koestler 1954a: 357)

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- MS 2424/3 *Reviews. Reflections on Hanging.*
- MS 2425/3 *Reviews. The Sleepwalkers.*
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Harold Harris Files: Papers relating to Arthur Koestler

- MS 2462/5 MS of *The Fall of Dr Icarus* (previously catalogued as MS 2462/4-5)
- MS 2463/7 Hutchinson files.
- MS 2465/1 Memorial Meeting for Arthur and Cynthia Koestler.
- MS 2465/3 Obituaries and press cuttings.
- MS 2466/1 Royalty statements up to and including December 1989.
- MS 2467/1 Royalty statements: January 1990 - February 1993.
- MS 2468/4 Correspondence with/about Arthur and Cynthia Koestler: Wills. Last messages.

C. ORWELL ARCHIVE, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON LIBRARY.

- 7/3 Political diary, 28 May 1940 - 28 August 1941 (typescript)
7/4 Political diary, 14 March 1942 - 15 October (ms. notebook)
7/5 Political diary, 14 March 1942 - 15 November (typescript)
- 9-10 Letters from Orwell
- 11-12 Letters to Orwell
- 15 League For The Freedom And Rights of Man (correspondence files, copies)

D. HILLARY ARCHIVE, TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.

II/3/109 An enquiry from the Society for Psychical Research seeking to verify the experience described by RH [cf. TLE p 141] and to obtain corroborative evidence.

II/4/4/

5.3 Copies of two accident report summaries, the second involving Sgt J Wilkinson.

5.4 An RAF casualty record. "not open to the public and made available by the Trustees in confidence"

II/4/6/A

32 *Bottome, Phyllis. Richard Hillary and the RAF* ND. 10pp, ts.

APPENDIX 1

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE II

PART ONE: THE KNOD¹

1.

He did not know whether this door at which he knocked in the darkness meant safety or a trap, and for the first time since his mission began he felt fear, bordering on panic, running in shivers through his skin and spine. He turned his collar up and knocked twice more at the door of the rickety little house. It was a terrible disappointment to find that the fear which he thought vanquished, had returned, like a cancer-growth returns after each new operation. Now that he had admitted its presence, he was even able to recall the exact time when the fear had re-taken possession of him: at ten o'clock, two hours ago, when the explosion with its blue flame-spear had stabbed the night, followed by the red and black blaze, the slow-motion ascent of the big concrete morsels of the dam like rocks thrown up by a volcano; the whirling flight of fragments of the railway-bridge, thin as matchsticks, preceding the hesitant, pathetic collapse of the whole structure; the roar and drawling thunder making the ground vibrate under his feet, overlaid by the second and third explosion; - and then silence.

It was during that short, ominous silence that the Fear had regained possession of him, together with the incredulous realisation of his mission's success. For up to that moment of silence which preceded the stampede of boots, the Police whistles, sirens and fire-bells; up to that moment of silence suspended in space and time, he had never really believed that he would succeed. At first, during the period of instruction two thousand miles from here, at that curious training

¹The word "VOW" has been crossed out in the typescript and "KNOD" (*sic*) rted in Koestler's hand.

PART ONE.: THE ~~VAN~~ KNOC

1.

He did not know whether this door at which he knocked in the darkness meant safety or a trap, and for the first time since his mission began he felt fear, bordering on panic, running in shivers through his skin and spine. He turned his collar up and knocked twice more at the door of the rickety little house. It was a terrible disappointment to find that the fear which he thought vanquished, had returned, like a cancer-growth returns after each new operation. Now, that he admitted its presence, he was ~~was~~ even able to recall the exact time when the fear had re-taken possession of ~~him~~ him: at ten o'clock ~~two~~-night, two hours ago, when the explosion with its blue flame-spear had stabbed the night, followed by the red and black blaze, the slow-motion ascent of the big concrete morsels of the dam like rocks thrown up by a volcano; the whirling flight ^{of} fragments of the railway-bridge, thin as matchsticks, preceding the hesitant, pathetic collapse of the whole structure; the roar and drawling thunder making the ground vibrate under his feet, overlaid by the second and third explosion; - and then silence.

It was during that short, ominous silence that the Fear had regained possession of him, together with the incredulous realisation of his mission's success. For up to that moment of silence which preceded the stampede of boots, the Police whistles, sirens and fire-bells; up to that moment of silence suspended in space and time, he had never really believed that he would succeed. At first, during the period of instruction two thousand miles from here, at that curious training centre billeted on a Tudor ~~in~~ country house with 'Monrepos'

Figure 3. The first page of the surviving typescript of *Arrival and Departure II*. One of the cleaner pages of typing, the pencil annotation in Koestler's hand "Amo, ergo sum" is discernible at top right (but much clearer in the original document).

centre billeted on a Tudor country house with 'Monrepos' written over the gate; the dam, bridge and power-station had merely existed as an abstract point on the map, surrounded by a compass-circle in red ink and magnified in detail, but utterly unreal. Equally unreal were the potential helpers he was to ferret out² for the task, those vague and furtive allies without a name and address who were only to be reached through a precarious chain of connections, constantly breaking up and being re-formed, with many dubious links, tense with intrigue and distrust. The more the moment of departure approached the more the whole scheme had appeared to him as an elaborate phantasmagory, with the admirably logical details which one finds in the delusions of the insane. When at last the car drove him to the aerodrome, he wondered - while trying to make polite conversation to the officer beside him - at what precise moment the dimmed headlights of the winding lane pointed in the direction of the dam, the bridge and the power station, and he had more difficulty than ever to convince himself that they really existed, somewhere on the immense, arched surface of the Continent. Even during the hours of the uneventful flight over a cover of cloud which now looked like a lake boiling over in the moonlight, now like a snow-covered plane, it seemed incredible that they were really moving towards just that one, microscopical spot on the earth; the only reality behind it all was his conviction that he would never return, and the tranquil acceptance of that fact.

Imbued with the certainty of sacrifice and self-immolation, he had been immune against the Fear - that strangling horror of abandonment that he now felt on the doorstep of this mute, sordid house. There had of course been moments of nervous anxiety while he waited in the aerodrome, or during the minute preceding the jump from the plane; but they were merely physical. The great Fear had returned only after the explosion, when he suddenly awoke to the fact that, against all expectation, his mission had been successfully fulfilled and brought to an end. In that moment of silence, immediately after the first wave of elation or perhaps even simultaneously with it, he had felt as if a

²The words "hunt up" are typed above this phrase as an alternative.

burden of which he had believed to be rid for ever, has descended anew at him: the burden of the hope for survival, the responsibility towards himself which it carried.

During the previous weeks, ever since his arrival in the hostile country, he had been beyond hope and fear, a man without his shadow, released from human bondage. He had lived and acted with a supreme sensation of freedom, free from all personal worry and care, in a prolonged state of euphoria. It was this sensation of freedom and irresponsibility which had enabled him to accomplish his mission; to inspire confidence and exert authority, to overcome the incountable difficulties, dangers and snags with a sleep-walkers assurance. But now he had woken up. The explosion had shattered the dream, had buried that deep source inside him from which his serene self-assurance had sprung. He was cut off from the subterranean communion with a force that he could not name, and left shivering and alone; the stars had suddenly become paler, the immense night had shrunk and closed in around him like walls; his lost shadow had returned and lain down at his feet. Grave had been withdrawn, death re-gained its sting. He was condemned to hope again.

2.

There was still no sign of life inside the house. This was an address which he was only to contact after having accomplished his task, to be helped out of the country to neutral soil. It was a chain which worked independently and without³ contact with those who had helped him so far.

A patrol approached through the street; their boots squelched in the mud. Peter pressed himself tight against the wall. The yellow beam of a torch hit the wall three feet ahead of him and moved on. As they passed him, one of the soldiers began to whistle Schubert's Serenade. The low whistling to the dragging rhythm of the footsteps conveyed a feeling of hopeless dejection. He waited until the smacking squelch of

³"had no" is inserted in Koestler's script above "without" in the text.

the boots had died away and then knocked once more at the door. Again there was no response; and yet some instinct told him that the house was not empty. He pressed his ear against the door.

At first he was not certain but as he kept still, holding his breath, he heard the breathing at the other side of the door beyond doubt. It sounded rather like the quick panting of a dog on a hot day. But the rhythm was even faster and irregular; it was the panting of a human being trying to suppress a scream or a sob, probably by pressing its fist into its mouth and biting its knuckles. The closeness and stifled intimacy of the sound left no doubt that the person was standing pressed against the other side of the door; Peter imagined he could feel the vibrations of its heartbeat through the wood. He knocked again at the door, even softer than before, a whispered series of raps.

The other person's terror, radiating through the door, had obliterated⁴ his own, so that he was more surprised than scared when he felt the touch of a hand on his shoulder. He turned and saw a short, shapeless figure in a black cassock, facing him in the darkness.

"What do you want in my house?", the priest asked. His voice was meant to be menacing but sounded frightened instead. His hand remained on Peter's shoulder, but the grip of his fingers was soft; his asthmatic breath blew in short, sour whiffs into Peter's face. In his right hand he held some white and shiny object, which Peter made out as milk-bottle [as if preparing to strike with it]⁵. The sudden apparition of the bellicose little priest seemed unreal and grotesque, but Peter had been prepared for it and an immense feeling of relief mounted like a hot bubble in his throat, halfway between a nervous chuckle and a sob. He gave the password:

"I came to confess, father."

The grip on his shoulder relaxed [and the arm holding the milk-bottle went limp]; but the voice remained suspicious:

⁴The word "erased" is typed above as an alternative.

⁵Sections in the typescript that are underscored in wavy lines are ed in the Appendix in square brackets: it is clear that Koestler meant to ge these in the original text.

"At this hour of the night?"

"I came from far and I have far to go", said Peter.

For a second the priest stood still, breathing audibly and scrutinizing Peter who, in spite of the darkness, saw the shimmer of the slightly protruding eyeballs looking obliquely up to him. Then the hand let go of Peter's shoulder and began to fumble for the key under the cassock.

"There is somebody behind the door", said Peter in a whisper, and heard simultaneously the soft, swift patter of bare feet running away from the door and up some stairs.

"Nobody lives here except me", the priest said feebly. He opened the door; the darkness inside the house was denser than the street. The priest bolted the door and struck a primitive lighter; it consisted of a thick, long wick, with the flint and wheel attached to it by a clasp. They stood in a narrow passage, in front of an equally narrow staircase; there was a sour, nauseating smell in the house. The priest picked up a candle stuck into a bottle from under the staircase, lit it and led the way in silence up the stairs.

"I tell you there is somebody in the house", said Peter softly, as he mounted the stairs behind him. The priest gave no reply.

They entered a small room, containing an iron bedstead with a rug spread over the mattress, a kitchen table and a packing crate serving as a stool. The broken window-pane was covered by a newspaper. The priest took off his cassock and hung it on two hooks over the window, to screen the yellow light of the candle. He wore a broadly striped sleeveless undershirt (tricot?) like a footballer's dress over his black shirt (surplice). He was very short and plump; in spite of his surplice Peter knew that he was bow-legged. His tonsure was surrounded by thin strands of hair, moist with perspiration like a flushed child's. Everything about him was soft and rotund except for the protruding eyeballs which at certain moments⁶ stuck out of his face as if mounted on stems, like the sad eyes of an insect on a magnified photograph. He patted the rug on the bed, asked Peter to sit down,

⁶The words "when he became excited" are written above as an alternative.

fumbled about distractedly in the room and turned to the door⁷, muttering that he would be back soon. At the door however he hesitated. He seemed to listen for noises out in the passage. A shifty look came into his eyes, and he asked awkwardly:

"You have not - perhaps - something eatable on you?"

Peter produced a piece⁸ of chocolate and some crunched biscuits from his pocket and handed them over. The priest's round face suddenly lit up, and in that moment Peter began to like him. "Wait please", he said with an apologetic smile. He plunged his hand into Peter's pocket, turned it inside out and shook the crumbs into his other hand. He fumbled under the bed, pulled out a piece of cardboard and carefully heaped the chocolate, the crumbs and the biscuits on it. Still smiling, he again turned to Peter:

"Milk... You have not - perhaps - your iron ration of tinned milk? - Of course not", he said apologetically, as Peter shook his head. "I could get no milk to-day...It's a catastrophe", he added in sudden despair, staring at the cardboard arrangement. Then his eyes lit up again. He dived gingerly under the bed - [the space under the bed seemed to contain all his household equipment] - and produced a spirit lamp and a small sauce-pan with an iron handle. He divided the chocolate into two halves, put one half into the saucepan, covered it with water from an earthenware jug and lit the lamp. "Help yourself and God will help you" he said with a sly smile. Then he listened again. Peter heard the same suppressed breathing behind the door as a few minutes ago in the street. For a second the priest looked at him doubtfully.

"Oh", he said at last, "[you may as well know.] It will make no difference..."

He opened the door by a few inches and spoke very softly into the darkness:

"We have a visitor...But he is a friend, you need not be afraid. Come in, pigeon..."

Slowly, as if not to frighten the child by the sudden fright of the

⁷The words "then turned to go" are typed above as an alternative.

⁸The word "bar" is typed above as an alternative.

stranger, he opened the door. "This is Rachel" he said, taking her hand into his plump fingers, his round face beaming timidly.

The first thing Peter noticed and the last thing he was to remember of her, were Rachel's eyes. They were dark, wide-open with a [slight] winged slant / with a soft slant like a bird's wings / over the high cheekbones; the candle gave them a weird glow. The rest of the small white face seemed merely a frame for them made more effective by the smooth fall of the dark hair, which, like a pair of heavy curtains, parted in the form of an inverted V on the temples. She was about seven, slim and frail, and dressed in blue flannel overalls, the blouse neatly tucked into the slacks. She was certainly scared but her eyes were dark and calm, [with the heavy stillness of hospital patients when the nurse bends over them;]⁹ they turned away from Peter to the food on the table then slowly back, and remained fixed on Peter's face. He felt their watchful gaze like a physical touch. He tried to smile, then averted his eyes¹⁰.

"He is a friend", repeated the priest, bending over the spirit-lamp and stirring the brew. "He brought you chocolates and biscuits. This half is for you." He spoke to her as if she were an adult, and there was deference in his voice, an apology, almost an implorement.

The child's gaze returned to the cardboard and for a moment remained glued on the food, but she did not move from the door.

"Why don't you eat it, pigeon?" the priest asked timidly.

Rachel gave no answer. She stood upright at the door, watching Peter as if he might jump at her at any moment and she had to be prepared; and yet her eyes were not scared.

"Tell me that you are a friend", the priest said.

Peter smiled laboriously, baring his upper teeth. "Good evening", he said.

"I am cooking this for David", said the priest. "I could get no milk

⁹This phrase has been substantially reworked, with later scripted sections suggesting "their heavy stillness disowning the ----- of their less bodies".

¹⁰The words "but after a while it was he who had to avert his eyes" are added above as an alternative.

today." He sounded even more apologetic. "How is David?"

"He will die", the child said in a calm, thin, frozen voice.

"Now, now", said the priest. He took the saucepan with the boiling liquid from the lamp, blew at it for a while, and carefully decanted it into the milk-bottle. "We must wait until it cools, then we shall take it up to him. It will give him strength..." He rubbed his hands; it looked as if he were washing them in invisible water.

Rachel's eyes followed every movement of his. "You must give him milk", she said.

"Tomorrow", said the priest. "Tomorrow I shall certainly get milk. Meanwhile this will give him strength." He wiped the pearling (*sic*) sweat from his tonsure. "Tomorrow..." he repeated helplessly. He sat down on the crate and stretched out his plump hands, trying to pull the child onto his knees.

"Come, eat these lovely things", he went on. "He has brought them, our friend. Lovely, they are..."

He glanced furtively at the cardboard, and hurriedly, guiltily averted his eyes. The child let itself¹¹ be pulled nearer to the priest, but remained standing at the crate. He put the cardboard into her hand. She accepted it and looked at the chocolate. Suddenly the sweet smell of it struck her and her eyes filled with tears. The priest got up and gently forced her to sit down on the crate. His hands shook and his tonsure was again covered with little drops of sweat. "Now eat", he said in a thick voice. "The bottle will meanwhile cool and then we shall take it to David."

He picked up a broken piece of biscuit and pushed it into her mouth. The child swallowed and began to cough. He patted her on the back and broke a piece of chocolate from the bar, but she shook her head. When she finished coughing, she said in her thin, controlled voice:

"I have not said the prayer."

"Oh, the prayer. How could you forget it?" said the priest, and his round face suddenly beamed with relief. "They have a different grace for different kinds of food", he explained to Peter. He bent down to

¹¹The word "herself" is typed above as an alternative.

the child:

"Is there also one for chocolate, pigeon?"

Rachel looked puzzled. She wiped her eyes and squinted at the chocolate. "After all, she is only a child", Peter thought with relief.

"I shall say the First Fruit of the Year."

"Then you shall have to say it twice", the priest smiled. "Once for this year and once for last year."

The child's face remained serious, but her eyes, fixed at the brown lump in the priest's hand became troubled. Peter thought that she really looked like a dark pigeon¹², which will never fly and knows it.

"Blessed be the Lord, king of the world, Who groweth the fruit in the orchards" the child recited quietly.

"Now you eat", the priest said contentedly, "and I shall talk to the guest."

He sat down on the bed, on Peter's side; the child sat on the crate, turning her profile to them, eating slowly and carefully, raking up the crumbs together and picking them up with her fingers.

With a relieved sigh, the priest turned to Peter:

"You will be safe", he said. "You need not worry. The children come first."

Peter nodded. He understood that he was to ask no questions in Rachel's presence. But her prayer, the exotic beauty of that pale face, the slant of her eyes and the dark intensity of her gaze, had given him sufficient clues. She belonged to the Cursed Race. He remembered the mixed transports, their lilting song, their phantastic shadows on the rocks as they marched into the vans. He had probably seen her parents among them, some bearded little man in a black silk cap and a frail, withered woman with Rachel's mouth and eyes, leaning on his arm, marching with small, dancing steps through the double hay of the burning torches. He tried to avoid the child's eyes. "Can I sleep here?", he asked instead, ashamed for having to care about himself.

"You are welcome", said the priest, [with a solemn little bow]. "But

¹²The words "reminded him of a pigeon" are written above as an
—rnative.

you will have to sleep in the attic, with Rachel and David, in case there is a search..." He hesitated, then asked:

"You have brought the money?"

Peter nodded.

"In that case you only need to stay one night. I shall get your papers tomorrow. Tomorrow you will be safe..."

His eyes became shifty, and there was an undefinable reproach in his voice. He seemed to want to add something, but bethought himself (*sic*). "We shall talk later", he said, rising. "First we must take his dinner to David."

He felt the temperature of the bottle. Rachel shook the last crumbs from the cardboard into her palm and licked them up, watching him. He shook the bottle, half lifted it to his lips, checked himself and handed it to Rachel:

"You better taste it before we give it to him, pigeon."

She took a very small sip and tasted it earnestly. Then she nodded, slowly licking her lips. The priest took the candle and led the way to the landing, then up the narrow wooden steps - a compromise between a staircase and a ladder, which creaked menacingly under their feet. Rachel followed with the bottle and Peter brought up the rear. She climbed the steps in front of him and Peter saw, as her feet came with his eyes, that she wore old leather sandals over her bare feet - it reminded him of his own childhood, of the feeling of dry sand between his toes walking on the beach. The callous skin over her heels was wrinkled with pale scars where the sandals rubbed. He felt a craving to pick her up and carry her, the warm little body in flannel-overalls huddled against his chest. Through a chink of the rough deal-wall he saw the pink reflection of the fire on the sky. It made him start, for since he had met the priest he had almost forgotten about the dam. Once more he wondered how on earth he, Awkward Peter as they had called him at school, had been capable of carrying out this task. Perhaps he had only dreamt it - he knew he hadn't; and yet the whole thing now appeared very much like a dream. But had it not always been the same in the past? The leaflets, the hunt through the soot-covered suburbs, the breathless escape on the tram - and then, coming home to mother, the

whole thing had dissolved into dreamy unreality. And the same applied to the interview with Raditsch, the cellar with the six black-clad men, the mixed transport - on Sonia's couch they were but echoes of a weird fairy tale¹³. But the pink glare was there, and the dam was burning, and he had done it. That same gaunt body of his which became filled up with the molten lead of shyness whenever he looked at the little girl, had done all the jumping and running and cunning: this face with the timid grin, bearing its teeth at him through the mirrors of the past, was taken seriously by others as the face of a responsible man of action. They had believed him, some even respected him and obeyed him. Why then could he not believe in himself? Not even with the evidence of that reddish glare before his eyes? Why did it all seem pretence, a school pantomime of naive heroics? There must be something wrong with him, a split in the mind...But perhaps the split was in the world outside, between the two planes of reality, the one of howling and gnashing of teeth, the other imbued with gentle warmth and the smooth sand of the beach between one's toes. Two planes which never met, had no knowledge of each other. One walked over that safe, flat, sunny beach, suddenly a hole opened and the underworld swallowed one up - the Other reality, the realm of [the tragic and the absolute], of the evil dream, the stifled, unheard scream, the torture of death and nativity, where we all wear cothurns and Greek masks before their faces. And then one comes up again and they ask one: where have you been? If you told them the truth they would give you pills or send you to the psychiatrist. And yet there it is, under their feet, the Other plane. Who then suffered from a split in the mind - he, Awkward Peter or the world?...

The loft was dark and stifling. It smelled of hot wood and some unspeakable putrefaction. In the light of the candle which the priest had raised above his head, Peter saw a big heap of maize-cobs, the grain eaten off, which he knew was used in this country as pig-fodder. The heap was almost man-high and rose to within a few inches from the apex of the slanting roof. Thick cobwebs hung from the beams, cobwebs

¹³The word "myth" is written above as an alternative.

such as Peter had never seen before. They must have hung there undisturbed for years, built and reinforced by generations of spiders, until the mass of dead and desiccated insects, of dust and fluff have gone into the making of a repulsive fabric, at places almost thick as a finger, dangling like a series of curtains or dirty stage-prospects across the loft. Rachel went down on her knees and, by rapidly throwing the cobs aside dug a kind of groove or ditch into the cob-heap which allowed her to creep through under the cobwebs leaving them undisturbed over her head. Her digging had the precision of long-practised habit, and as she quickly threw the cobs both sides and behind her she reminded Peter of a little terrier digging after a mole. the priest also went down on all fours and crept forward behind her, careful not to set the cobwebs aflame with his candle; Peter crawled after him.

In the distant corner of the loft, hidden from the entrance by the cob-heap, there was a mattress on the floor and next to it a packing crate which served as a cradle. Peter marvelled at the ingenious simplicity of the hiding place. The priest got on his feet and Peter followed his example; and then he saw the being in the crate, and seized by panic turned away.

He had seen people tortured, disfigured and dead; he had been hardened to the sights and sounds of the other plane, the world of the evil dream - or rather, he had developed an elastic defence against their impact, a system of mental springs or buffers underneath his sensitive timidity. But this creature was different; it evoked that mystic, nauseating horror which monstrous perversions of nature brought forth: cats with dog's heads, six-legged calves or embryos preserved in jars. That was indeed what this being in the cradle looked at first sight. Its head with the hollow eye-sockets resembled the skull of a mummy; it was inordinately big and hung loosely on a long, thin, wrinkled neck, like a plucked chicken's. Its legs were shrivelled sticks, pointlessly attached to a balloon-like belly, with the outsized naval and genitals sticking out like obscene stigmata. But the most frightening thing was that this creature actually lived. Slight

convulsions ran through the atrophied limbs; the thin old-man's mouth¹⁴ sucked at some shiny object and its chin glistened with drivel; swarms of flies were crawling over its face. Peter thought in horror: such a thing should not be allowed to live. He did not think of its suffering; his panic was caused by the fact that the monster shared with him the same quality of aliveness, thus threatening the natural fundamentals of his own existence. He turned his head away and, as it always happened when he was scared, his elastic defences began to work. Like a well-oiled mechanism, his reasoning stood up against his fear, his brain took control over his bowels. He suddenly understood why the dog-headed cat, giants, midgets and monsters were so frightening: they exploded the illusion of Nature's infallibility, gave away the squalid secrets of her workshop, shook the fundamentals on which one stood; if such mistakes were possible life ceased to be safe...

He looked at Rachel. She watched her brother with the same still, intent gaze as she had watched Peter and the chocolate. He looked at the priest. He was contemplating the monster with a rapturous look - like a lover contemplating his sleeping girl, a mother her beautiful child. Their eyes met and Peter again read in them that glimmer of accusation and reproach he had noticed before. Or was he imagining it all - expression, implications, all this jugglery with ton-heavy weights of guilt? But then, he was back in the underworld again, in the spheres of heavy breathing where each look and sigh was fraught with deadly meaning. The cobwebs, like heavy curtains, shut the everyday world out. He was back on the stage, among the tragic and theatrical footlights. Imagine telling Sonia about this unreal scene - the corpulent¹⁵ little priest, unfit for his heroic role like a cheap actor on a provincial stage; Rachel with her unearthly, earnest sweetness - did not her pouting mouth remind him of Odette and behind Odette of a face even more remote, hidden among the cob-veil prospects of the past?; and he himself, bending over this horrible thing in the crate, one foot in a dream, one in reality...

¹⁴The word "mummy-lips" is typed above as an alternative.

¹⁵The word "fat" is typed above as an alternative.

The priest slid his plump hand under the mummy-head. The idea of touching that soft, deformed skull nauseated Peter. As he forced himself to look closer, he saw that the shiny object the creature was licking was the smooth, round head of a copper Jesus crucified on an ebony cross. The priest turned the creature's head round, pushed the rubber dummy of the bottle between its lips, picked up the crucifix and wiped the drivel from it.

"Perhaps you think this is blasphemy", he said to Peter, "But babies like glistening things and I have nothing else. I am sure he does not mind."

The creature sucked at the bottle. Its eyes were closed and grimy. After a few seconds it began to cough. Its face went blue, the puffed body contracted in a spasm, it threw up what it had swallowed. Rachel wiped its face and the priest made awkward soothing noises. They tried again, with the same result.

"What's wrong with it?", asked Peter with a thick voice, fighting his nausea.

"Wrong?", said the priest. "There is nothing wrong with David. He used to be a beautiful fat baby."

"But is there not something - the matter with it?"

"Nothing", the priest said drily. ["Nothing except that he is starving to death."]

At last they succeeded in making the creature keep some of the liquid down. It lay more quietly now, its head turned away. The priest laid the cross with the copper Jesus next to its face. He watched it [for a while, then turned to Rachel:]

"I must now talk with the guest. Later he will come up and sleep here. You go to sleep, pigeon. Shall I tuck you in?"

Rachel shook her head. She had taken off her sandals and stood barefooted in her trim overalls on the mattress.

"Shall I say your prayers with you?"

Again she shook her head.

"Good night", said the priest. He held out his hand and Rachel shook hands with him. Then he went down on his belly and crept back under the cobwebs. Peter followed him. On the other side of the heap they stood

up and refilled the ditch with cobs. The priest looked at him with modest triumph:

"They have searched the house twice and never suspected that there was anybody behind this heap. Poked their heads over the top of the ladder, saw the cobwebs and went down again. They are stupid - in a way."

Carrying the candle before him with a rounded arm as if leading a church procession, he preceded¹⁶ Peter back to his room. He invited Peter to sit on the bed and seated himself facing him on the crate.

"Now we can talk", he said, wiping the perspiration from his head.

3.

The business part of their talk did not take long. Father Zlatko - that was the priest's name - was in contact with a corrupt officer of the army of occupation, who for a very considerable sum, sold exit permits, duly signed and stamped, to neutral territory. Peter handed the money over, which the priest counted carefully, wetting his thumb, and with the same [greedy] look as before, when arranging the food on the cardboard. Tomorrow morning Father Zlatko was to see the officer in question; by noon Peter would be in the train, and by the same night safely over the frontier. It was as simple as that - if one happened to have the right contacts, the money, and if there was no hitch. In nine out of ten cases there was a hitch. "You are lucky", said the priest with a sigh, in which Peter once more discerned that undertone of reproach.

An awkward silence followed. Peter knew that Father Zlatko was not supposed to ask [him] questions; nor was he. The house and the street were silent; it was deep in the night. Peter felt very tired. He rose; "I better get some sleep."

The priest rose hesitatingly, took hold of the candle, then sat it down again as if he had reached a sudden decision. "Wait please", he said. "I have something for you. I have kept it for a special

¹⁶The word "led" is typed above as an alternative.

occasion...It is not often that I get visitors, you know", [he added awkwardly.]

He reached under the bed and brought out a bottle with a pale liquid in it and two glasses. He pulled out the loose cork with his teeth and held the bottle under Peter's face. "Smell it please", he said.

A scent of fruit, spirit and bitter almonds rose from the bottle. Peter inhaled it deeply. For a second he closed his eyes and a succession¹⁷ of loose, shapeless memories floated through his mind: students' attics crammed with books and photograph, youngsters sprawling on the couch and carpet in a haze of mixed cigarette smoke and of the same smell mounting from the pools of upset¹⁸ glasses; the garden of an inn surrounded by a stone wall, hung with chinese paper-lamps, a gypsy with his fiddle stuck under his chin swaying and bowing like a willow in the breeze and a second one, with one eyes, beating the xylophone with his padded drumsticks in a woeful frenzy; and the same scent of fruit, spirit and bitter almonds in a young woman's breath, escaping through half-open lips. "Plum brandy", he said with awe and wonder in his voice, bearing his teeth.

The priest nodded, wiping the dust from the glasses which were both cracked. He carefully filled them to the brim with his plump, nimble fingers.

"Illegally distilled", he said. "The peasants here all do it. I got this bottle from one named Janko. He lived three houses further down. They shot him a fortnight ago; the next day his wife brought me this bottle, before they took her too." He smelled the glass with dilated nostrils.

"What did he do?", asked Peter.

The priest smiled. "Oh, nothing. He got drunk on St. Stephen's day, the patron saint of his family, sang certain songs and said certain things. The windows were open and one could hear him in the street - well, this is to his memory. Requiescat in pace..."

¹⁷The word "series" is typed above and "sequence" written below as alternatives.

¹⁸The word "spilled" is typed above as an alternative.

He threw his head back and drained his glass in one gulp. Peter did the same. The drink was so strong that it felt in his throat more like some burning, scented vapour than a liquid. It burned its way down to the centre of his body and from there radiated well-being and delight into all his tissues. Then he felt as if the pure spirit, freed from all substance, were mounting back to his head, purging it from weariness and selfish fretting. A minute before he had been drunk with fatigue and buzzing thoughts; now he felt suddenly sober in a relaxed state of crystalline wakefulness. Father Zlatko had sat down on his side on the mattress, smiling vaguely in front of him. "God bless poor Janko", he said. "He had no children fortunately, so he need not fret wherever he is."

"Does not fretting end when it is over anyway?", said Peter.

The priest looked at him with his protruding eyes. "You don't believe", he asked amiably, filling the glasses. Peter shook his head and blushed.

"Then it is easy for you", said the priest. "No responsibility. No long-term obligations. Life is a holiday for you. I wish [to God] I were able not to believe."

Peter looked [sideways] at his face. It looked naive and sincere. He had been puzzled by this little priest who had almost struck him with a milk-bottle; now he understood that there was no mystery about Father Zlatko: he was simple-minded. He was also weak and soft, but he had the peasant's cunning, /that ancestral[ry] shrewdness which was in the blood of his countrymen./

"If you don't believe", said the priest, "what makes you do these dangerous things?"

Peter emptied his glass and grinned. "That's what I have been trying to find out since..." he said, and felt an immense well-being spread through his body. "Sometimes I think I know the answer, then it slips away from me. But I once met a young man - he was burnt all over and disfigured - who said that nothing was more boring than to try to find out one's own motives."

The priest looked vacant; he did not understand or was not interested. For a while they both sat in silence on the narrow bed,

looking into the yellow flame of the candle.

"Do you think David will die?", the priest asked.

Peter felt as if he had been wakened from a pleasant, hazy dream. He resented it. The image of the repulsive little monster spoiled the hour's enchanted peace. "I thought it was crippled or had some disease", he said.

The priest shook his head. "There is nothing wrong with little David", he said. "He was a nice fat baby when I took him. Fat like this..." He indicated it with his plump hands. "You should have seen him."

He paused and emptied his glass with a jerky movement.

"Now he will die", he went on, "and it is my fault. My fault, and your fault."

Peter gave no answer. After a while the priest started talking again. The potent drink on an empty stomach had gone to his head; his tongue became heavy and he kept on slowly nodding with his head toward the flame; but what he said was coherent, and gradually his story unfolded itself.

Father Zlatko had lived for eleven years in a monastery, as brother storekeeper; he had entered the monastery at the age of seventeen, prompted by a vision of the virgin Mary with whose voice and smile he fell in love; since then, however, he had never seen her again. His theory was that she had been frightened by the violence of his emotions at their first meeting, and he hoped¹⁹ that if he conducted himself well and gave constant proof of his devotion to her Son, she would come again, though probably only in his old age. During the short struggle when the country was overrun by the invader, the monastery had been destroyed and the order dissolved; so Father Zlatko had decided to come and live with his brother in law. The brother in law however had been killed in the fighting, and as he had been a widower with no family or dependents, Father Zlatko took temporary possession of the house. The occupation authorities left him alone and the villagers welcomed his arrival, as the parish priest had been killed too.

¹⁹The words "but he knew" are typed above as an alternative.

A short time after he had come to live here, the occupation authorities had started the usual round-up of members of the Cursed Race in the freshly conquered country. They were not numerous in the land, sixty or seventy thousand of them - grocers in little mud-bound hamlets, tailors, watchmakers, weavers and artisans; the people were rather fond of them, they respected their ardent family life and looked with jovial derision upon the oddities of their peculiar traditions and rites. Now, however, they were informed that these people were the Cursed Race, who by their devilish conspiracies had brought about the Nation's downfall. Some believed it because they were bewildered and depressed, ready to believe anything, and because the official utterances brought some ancestral suspicion of black magic and witchcraft in them to stir; the majority shrugged their shoulders and looked on with dumb, non-understanding eyes; but they too began to avoid the Itzigs - not because they believed in the conspiracy, but because they felt that those were doomed, marked by the angel of death, and in the same way as they avoided consumptives and bankrupt farmers who had lost their land. Misfortune is near to disgrace, and the disgraced are not loveable; the healthy avert their eyes in sight of the stigma of death. So it came about that during the great round-up there was uneasiness, but no real stirring of protest. When some members of the Cursed Race came to ask their former gentile friends for a hiding place and help - their eyes lit with the craze of fear like oxens and calves which have broken loose from the halter²⁰ in front of the slaughterhouse - the natives fidgeted, became embarrassed and used transparent excuses for their refusal. It was not cowardice; only the instinctive quailing²¹ of the healthy from the smell of sickness and death. Thus it came about that, without causing great disturbance, the Mixed Transports could start from all over the country with their hymn-singing, vomiting freight of living flesh.

But there were some exceptions. In that morass of fear and abasement which the country had become, little islands sprang up, isolated men

²⁰The word "rope" is typed above as an alternative.

²¹The word "blanching" is typed above as an alternative.

and families, which stood out firm and pure in the midst of the bottomless squalor and stench, as if supported by some underground rocks of granite. They hid and harboured the doomed and many paid their lives for it and some with the lives of their families: wife, children, servants, grandparents, all put to death in one lump, dying unquestioningly, un-understandingly, in dumb, immortal glory. They did not do it out of any special liking for the persecuted, whom fear had often made repulsive, but for reasons only dimly felt and difficult to put into words, which were however for Father Zlatko the final proof of the existence of God.

"I have read", he said with a heavy tongue, "that one of your great philosophers has said: Man is to Man a wolf..." He chuckled. Your philosopher should have come to live among us here, and see and learn. See and learn, see and learn", he repeated, rubbing his hands. "You too...You have courage, but you have much to see and learn. Why, you did not even know what a baby looks like if it has no milk. You thought he was a cripple..."

Peter nodded; he nodded in humility, but the movements of his head became rather emphatic under the influence of the transparent liquid, and he kept on nodding without knowing it. But through the haze of his head he recalled the trite phrases about 'starving children' which he had so often heard and used without knowing what he was talking about, without an image of the shrivelled, pot-bellied little creature behind the heap of maize; and as he went on nodding what he affirmed was the utter separateness of the two planes, of the plains and the underworld; and that, whatever Sonia said, it was the latter which was his home. She called it morbidity, and so did the other people²² of the plains; for they had not seen David and the mixed transports, and did not know what they were talking so breezily about...

Father Zlatko went on rubbing his hands; his face was flushed and puffed; his weak mouth twitched. The smell of the spirit and of his empty stomach came in little puffs.

"Sodom and Gomorrah", he said and chuckled. "Fire and rocks...Was it

²²The word "inhabitants" is typed above as an alternative.

rocks? No, it was something else..." He looked puzzled and his lips worked.

"Fire and brimstone", said Peter.

"Brimstone!", the priest repeated contentedly. "You are clever, son. But you do not love people."

It struck Peter that this was probably true. He could not decide whether he was drunk or not. He felt a great excitement, a strange elation, as if this were a decisive hour in his life; but he knew not whether this was really so or merely drunkenness.

"I am stupid", said the priest, smiling, "but I know a thing or two. You have read the philosophers, but you have not understood the meaning of Sodom and Gomorrah."

Peter was not even sure whether the priest was drunk. To make sure, he emptied his glass.

"I will tell you about it", said Father Zlatko. "Abraham started by promising to find fifty good men in Sodom and God agreed that if Abraham found fifty there shall be no brimstones (*sic*). But no sooner had God agreed to fifty, Abraham offered forty-five; and when God agreed to forty-five, Abraham offered forty; and when God agreed to this too, Abraham offered thirty; and God agreed and he offered twenty; and God agreed and he offered ten..." He chuckled. "Now there are two kinds of people. There are those who are disgusted with Abraham's haggling and think that the Lord was very patient with him, and side with the Lord. Those are the people who have righteousness but no love. But there is the other kind, who are on Abraham's side. They understand that numbers do not count, and that one ounce of goodness may redeem a hundred tons of wickedness, because God's creatures cannot be weighed against each other on a fishmonger's scale. That was the lesson which Abraham wanted to teach God; but God at that time had an angry headache and had set his mind on brimstones. But despite his anger he must have recognised that Abraham was right, and that is perhaps why he made the covenant with him...The stupidities I talk", he said with a chuckle.

With all this, Father Zlatko seemed quite unaware [of the fact that] he himself was one of the righteous men for whose sake Sodom was probably to be spared the second time. From a few hints Peter was able

to piece together the story of Rachel and David. They were the children of a well-to-do timber merchant from a neighbouring village. Father Zlatko had met their Father once on a railway journey and entered into conversation with him. The merchant proved to be a student of the talmud, and they had a theological disputation which the priest immensely enjoyed. He had never heard of him again, but the merchant must somehow have heard of his arrival in this village, for on the night before the great round-up a little peasant girl arrived at the priest's house with the two children. She was the merchant's servant maid; she had walked the eight miles between the two villages holding the nursling in her arm and Rachel by the hand. That had been three months ago, and by now what remained of the learned merchant and his wife bleached somewhere in the mass-graves of the East, covered with chloride of lime, to prevent the members of the Cursed Race contaminating the world even after their death. David had then been a healthy child, kicking his legs and tear (*end of typescript*)

APPENDIX 2

DRAFT FOR A PETITION¹

(To be signed by at least a hundred leading personalities)

- (1) Since the end of the Second World War there has been an alarming increase in mutual suspicion and tension between the Western powers and the U.S.S.R.
- (2) After the first World War, the Victorious Powers had broadly the same political structure, and though there were conflicts of interest, there was no serious danger of war between them.
- (3) After the second World War, there is a basic difference in political structure between the U.S.S.R. and the Western Powers. Therein lies the fundamental cause of the growing suspicion and tension which, if allowed to develop unchecked, will leave no reasonable hope of avoiding a third World War within the next few decades.
- (4) We believe that despite this structural difference a stable *modus vivendi* can and should be found between the U.S.S.R. and the Western Powers. Its pre-condition is the abatement of suspicion, that is, psychological disarmament.
- (5) The aim of this Petition is to impress upon those who hold political responsibility, and primarily the Government of this country, the necessity to include the psychological factor in their power-calculations, as a factor equal in importance to Air Force and Navy. More precisely: that "psychological disarmament" should be made an object of international negotiations, as armaments in the Air and on the Sea are, and made subject to

¹Koestler Archive, MS 2345/2: 6-8. The typescript document is reproduced *simpliciter*; brackets are used as in the text, unless stated otherwise.

clearly defined clauses. Some of these are suggested in paragraph(8).

- (6) The measure of "psychological armament" should be defined as the extent to which a government obstructs the free exchange of information and ideas with the outside world. A country which builds a Chinese Wall of censorship from behind which it fires propaganda salvoes, is committing psychological aggression.
- (7) The term "psychological armament" is not meant to include criticism directed by one country against another. [This democratic right is as vital on the international as on the {domestic front}² if the country criticised has facilities for stating its case in the Press of the country from which the criticism originates.]³ But it becomes poisonous if the country attacked is deprived of this right of defence.
- (8)⁴ Since the end of the war, some of the victorious nations have raised certain territorial claims. Great Britain, who has no territorial claims, should table the demand for a general psychological disarmament, the first step of which would be an agreement between the [Big Two of Europe,] Great Britain and the U.S.S.R., based on the following points:
 - (a) Free access of British newspapers, periodicals, books and films to the general public in the U.S.S.R. and territories occupied and controlled by her; and vice versa;
 - (b) Such modifications of existing censorship regulations as to permit the free circulation of information about the outside

²My own insertion; the original manuscript is overtyped at this point.

³This section is circled in the original typescript.

⁴(8) (a) to (c) are bracketed in ink in the original typescript.

world throughout both countries and territories occupied and controlled by them;

- (c) The conclusion of an agreement between the Reuter and Tass agencies, according to which each of the two Agencies will compile a news summary of 500-1,000 words per day which the other Agency undertakes to distribute for internal consumption. The news summary should be confined to a factual presentation of items relating to developments in internal politics, economy, the Arts and sports, and its publication should be encouraged in the newspapers of both Government Parties and in the national Press;
 - (d) Each of the two contracting powers to broadcast news summaries and other factual informative material about their own country in the language of the other. The two contracting powers to undertake not to jam these broadcasts, and to facilitate their reception by relays from their own network;
 - (e) The abolition of restrictions on travel for British subjects in the U.S.S.R. and territories occupied by her, and vice versa;
 - (f) Active co-operation between the two Governments in the promotion of "Vacations Abroad"-schemes, on a mutual exchange basis, for students, teachers, writers, workers and professional men and women, who should be given opportunity to become acquainted with everyday life in the visited country by private billeting and contracts, unhampered by official direction and restriction.
- (9) The signatories of this petition realise that serious difficulties may be encountered in obtaining the acceptance of the above demands. Hence Psychological Disarmament should be given high priority on the agenda in all future negotiations. The demand for

the free circulation of ideas across frontiers, for restoring the arrested bloodstream of the world, should be raised at every meeting of the Big Four, the Security Council, the Committees and Assembly of the U.N.O., and made the pre-condition of any concessions of a political, economic of (*sic*) financial nature.

- (10) Even if acceptance of these demands were delayed, Great Britain, by presenting them, would exert a beneficent influence on world opinion and rally immediate international support.

SIGNED:

APPENDIX 3

THE DATING OF "DR ICARUS"

The Fall of Dr Icarus has the distinction of being the most substantial unpublished work in the Koestler canon. No reference has been found to the play in Koestler's own records or in any of the bibliographies or recent studies. Quite apart from any intrinsic merit or ethical import, the existence of the play demonstrates that Koestler was not unwilling to try his hand as a playwright after the hostile reception to *Twilight Bar*. The manuscripts also show Koestler interested in and willing to write for the relatively new medium of television. *Dr Icarus* remains the only work created by Arthur Koestler specifically for this medium.

Five complete typescripts exist of *Dr Icarus*. Of these, two are housed in the original Koestler Archive (MS 2325/4). For reasons that I have been unable to ascertain, the bulk of the material passed into the hands of Harold Harris, and after Harris' death into the Harris files appended to the Archive. This material includes the definitive bound and dated 110-page typescript *The Fall of Dr Icarus: A Play For Television in 3 Acts by Arthur Koestler, 3rd December 1959* and two other typescripts (MS 2462/6 and MS 2462/7), the latter inscribed on the title page "10 copies Friday 12 o/6".

Considerable manuscript notes (MS 2462/6), that also found their way into Harris' possession, will enable Koestlerian scholars to analyse their subject's working method in a manner not possible with most of his published works. As the play underwent successive revisions, each new script further accentuated the autobiographical detail contained in the play's action as the characters took on an identity all too familiar with those who know Koestler's life history.

Thus, whilst the earliest version places the action only vaguely into "the Early Twenties", "The Late Thirties" and "The Early Forties" (MS 2325/4) and does not give names to the characters Case One and Case Two, later versions narrow the focus of action to 1920, 1938 and 1940,

give the cases names and introduce, for light relief, the character of Mrs Smith and her dog, Pilgrim Father - the latter reflecting, no doubt, Koestler's own brief re-enactment of the earlier settlers following his impulsive purchase of Island Farm in 1950.

Dating the various manuscripts poses no small problem yet is crucial if we are to place *Dr Icarus* in the scheme I have outlined in this thesis of his ethical development from 1939 to 1959. That the play has ethical implications, there can be no doubt; indeed, its ethical theme leads this researcher to suggest that it ranks alongside the two *Arrival and Departure* novels as a work of major ethical significance.

The dating of the play that I propose below, by showing that the idea behind *Dr Icarus* evolved for over a decade before reaching its final form, strengthens the significance of the play.

The first clue for dating the rough working of the play - the second of the original Koestler Archive scripts - comes with the sketch on the verso of 2325/4: 69, which it is safe to conclude is the author's sketch for *Icarus*' study. Although crudely drawn, the sketch can be identified as the study in Bwlch Ocyn, with Koestler's dog Sabby asleep on the hearth! (Figure 4.)

Of more significance, perhaps, are the manuscript notes entitled "Act One" that were passed to Harris (MS 2462/6). Notes to Act Two also exist on Bwlch Ocyn notepaper. The fact that these are related to the earliest version is confirmed by the working title of the play, *Faustus*, changed to *Icarus*. There is a strong resemblance in the "leitmotif" notes for the play with those of the unfinished sequel to *Arrival and Departure*: *Icarus*' "rejection of the basic plane as experienced in (a) identification with suffering (b) mystic (religious painter) and (c) love as an absolute" all point to Peter Slavek. Furthermore, Koestler has written in these notes "Bring in Peter's promise? His guilt feeling?" (Plate 5.)

Compelling evidence for an early dating to the germination of *Dr Icarus* is that Koestler was clearly, from these notes, still working out his feelings of the "hours by the window". Yet, in his autobiography, he *claims* to have worked through these feelings by 1945.

Taken together, these pieces of evidence lead me to conclude that the

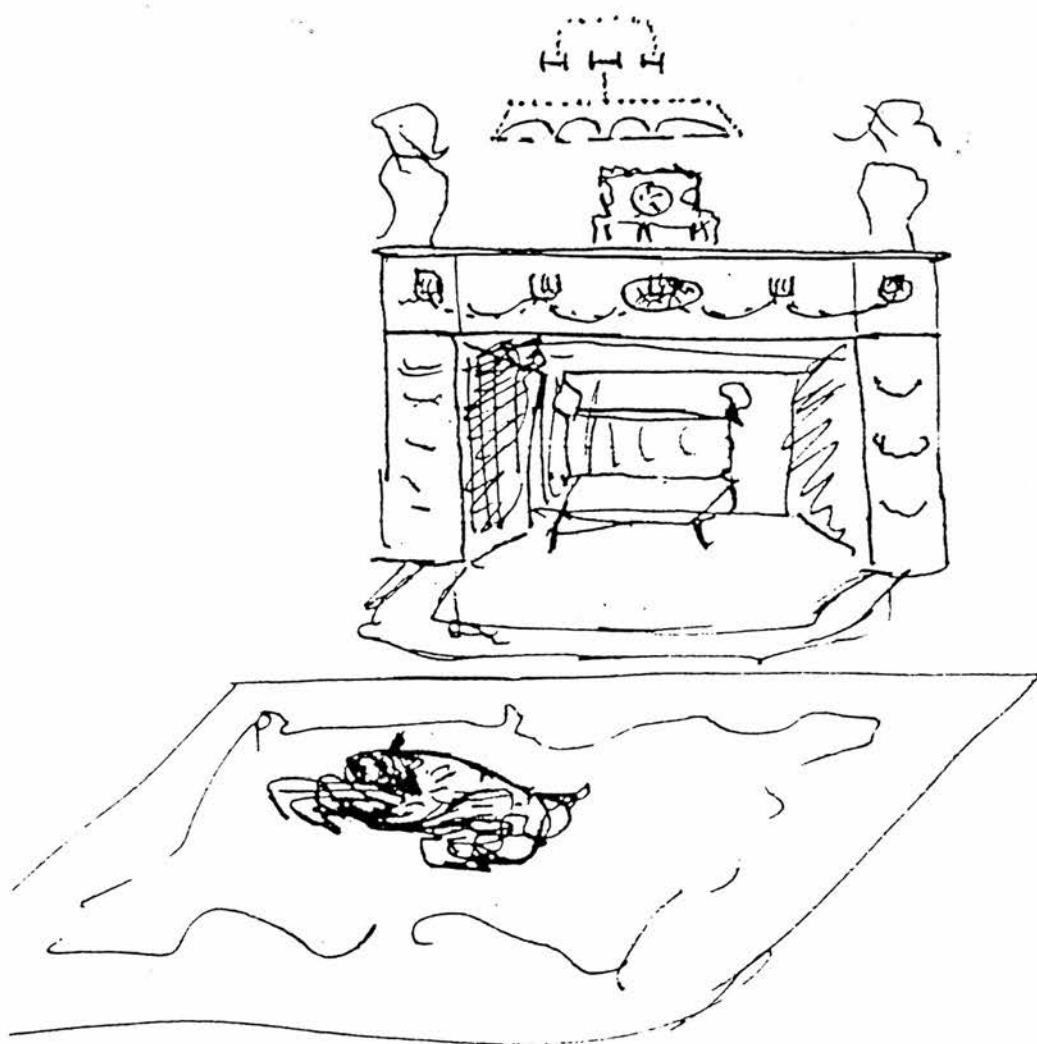


Figure 4. Koestler's sketch for Icarus' study: Blwch Ocyn (c. 1947) or Long Barn (c. 1956)? Whilst the fireplace design evokes Long Barn, the crude shape and size of the dog on the hearth point to Sabby, linking the sketch to Blwch Ocyn. Either interpretation suggests Koestler again using his own experience and setting for a fictional characterisation. (MS 2325/4: 69)

idea for the play was taking shape shortly after the author abandoned *Arrival and Departure II*, and was sufficiently well-formed in his mind for Koestler to sketch out a draft during the Bwlch Ocyn period, circa 1947-1948 when the characterisation of Peter Slavek was still fresh in his mind.

It appears that an early script was completed in January 1953, for we have a reference to "a play" in a letter dated 7 July 1953 that can refer only to *Dr Icarus*:

"I...have written a play, which I finished six months ago, and which nobody wants to produce as it is lacking in theatrical technique." (MS 2379/1: 143)

Koestler confessed to another friend that "the first act is the sketchiest of all, and the principal character is so far only a contour". (MS 2379/1: 34)

The question then arises, Is it possible that Koestler refashioned the script in 1953, put it to one side and then simply returned to the finished script in 1959? Considerable differences in the Harris scripts and those in the original Koestler Archive suggest this did not happen. Koestler's sensitivity over his foreign accent (reflected in Werner's accent exaggerated in the later, Harris, scripts) was more acute in the 1950s¹, when we know it was an important factor in Koestler declining public speaking engagements in the anti-hanging campaign. Also, the final dated version contains an almost *verbatim* passage from the second volume of his autobiography, *The Invisible Writing*, published in 1954.

"At 20, I knew all the passages to be found in the Catechism, and the world was an open book. At 65, near journey's end, I know that it is a text written in invisible ink. In our rare moments of grace we are able to decipher a small fragment of it." (MS 2462/5: 120)²

¹In March 1950, Koestler declared in a letter he would not broadcast again: "my accent is too disillusioning for my readers" (MS 2376/3:363). This is the earliest written reference I have found to Koestler's sensitivity over his accent.

²The equivalent passage in *The Invisible Writing* reads: "The quality of faith I cannot define beyond saying that in my youth I regarded the universe as an open book...whereas now it appears to me as a text written in invisible ink, of which, in our rare moments of grace, we are able to decipher a small fragment." (Koestler 1954a: 15)

This passage does not occur in earlier versions of the script, indicating it was added to *Icarus* after 1954. Admittedly, this does not conclusively point to a date of 1959, but it certainly seems reasonable to argue that Koestler revised *Icarus* six years after the first script was completed in 1953. This would be also fit in with the evolution of the televisual medium in the intervening years: it is highly unlikely that Koestler would have written "a play for television" in 1948-53 but several years later, the project was much more likely to appeal. And note too the July 1953 reference is to "a play", not a screenplay. By 1959, television had gained a substantial audience, one which a writer of Koestler's innovative nature was unlikely to ignore. Television might also help the play's author overcome the problems of "theatrical technique".

The fact remains that such a lengthy gestation period and its substantial revision for television after 1953 prove that Koestler was still very much examining the ethical and spiritual implications of his "hours by the window". The content of the screenplay confirms this theory.

Finally, the early change of title from *Faustus* to *Icarus* may itself say something about Koestler's ethics. Reference to Goethe's doctor, who sold his soul to the devil in exchange for worldly knowledge, was dropped in favour of reference to the Greek story of the man who would literally seek to ascend to the heavens in flight - an oblique metaphor of Koestler's lifelong search towards Third Order reality beyond what is perceived on earth. The Greek legend obviously continued to fascinate Koestler in his later years - one of his final projects, which he eventually had to abandon in 1981 due to ill health, was a parapsychological investigation into levitation. The project was named after Icarus' son: Project *Daedalus* (MS 2406/2).

To whom it may concern

The purpose of this note is to make it unmistakably clear that I intend to commit suicide by taking an overdose of drugs without the knowledge or aid of any other person. The drugs have been legally obtained and hoarded over a considerable period.

Trying to commit suicide is a gamble the outcome of which will be known to the gambler only if the attempt fails, but not if it succeeds. Should this attempt fail and I survive it in ~~a~~ a physically or mentally impaired state, in which I can no longer control what is done to me, or communicate my ~~wish~~ wishes, I hereby request that I be allowed to die in my own home and not be ^{resuscitated, or} kept alive by artificial means. I further request that my wife, or physician, or any friend present, should invoke habeas corpus against any attempt to remove me forcibly from my house to hospital.

My reasons for deciding to put an end to my life are simple and compelling: Parkinson's Disease and the slow-killing variety of ~~low~~ Leukemia (C.C.L.). I kept the latter a secret even from intimate friends to save them distress. After a more or less steady ~~decline~~ physical decline over the last years, the process has now reached an acute state with a ~~lot of~~ complications which make it advisable ~~to~~ to seek self-deliverance now, before I become

technically incapable of making the necessary arrangements.

I wish my friends to know that I am leaving their company in a peaceful frame of mind, with some dimid hopes for a de-personalised after-life beyond the confines of space, time, and matter, and beyond the limits of our comprehension. This "oceanic feeling" has often sustained me at difficult moments, and does so now, while I am writing this.

What makes it nevertheless hard to take this final step is the reflection of the pain it is bound to inflict on my few surviving friends, and above all my wife Cynthia. It is to her that I owe the relative peace and happiness that I enjoyed in the last period of my life - and never before.

Aldous Huxley

Since the above was written in June, 1982, my wife decided that after thirty-four years of working together she could not face life after my death.

A. H.

I fear both death and the act of dying that lies ahead of us. I should have liked to finish my account of working for Arthur - a story which began when our paths happened to cross in 1949. However, I cannot live without Arthur, despite certain inner resources.

Double suicide has never appealed to me; but now Arthur's incurable diseases have reached a stage where there is nothing else to do.

Cynthia Kessler

III Red

'Last independent' modifying version,
 ins before final scene with envelope

Werner says toward end: as been
 a house all the answers how - in
 invisible writing. ^{points} ~~to the~~ ^{new} ~~house~~. Relic dead. no post and
 red corn. This is the darkness at
 heart inside the corner. Accents it +
 he to read for us a picture of
 the invisible writing. Empty land.

Werner says ~~things~~ explicitly that God, etc are symbols or metaphors.
~~Relates Sevilla Dachau experiences~~ Empirical scepticism valid.
 But the arrow in the infinite blue equally valid, infinity too is
 a fact - and not "temporarily unsolved problem". ~~Related standing~~
~~at window (Sevilla) abtitten Hyperbola equation.~~ At the moment
 jubilant feeling of being alive and jubilant indifference to death.
 Not ~~xxxxxx~~ sour resignation, but jubilation: Life, where is thine
 misery, death where ~~xxxx~~ thine sting? I am, je suis, ego sum, vagyok
 And out of this world you cannot fall. Oain? Hurts. O, lovely hurt.
 Joy? Bliss. Oh blessed bliss. But then: garrotte, Grandin's torture.
 The opposite, the anguish, angst, the gnashing of teeth.

+ ~~Love Marriage~~
~~I am all these dreams to have the world~~
~~Confession of youth changes.~~

The highest & the trivial

One culture - merit works us

Leaving case up.

Murder with its squarion and coincidences

She is ~~happy~~ ~~in the~~ ~~hell~~

from the ~~hell~~ ~~hell~~ ~~hell~~

WERNER

Splitting up while he is?
 "It all depends on how
 Anna - Renata & the way
 they were conditioned
 (example)

Reunion of grateful pupils; sends out in disgust.

His brother Fair Allen?

His boy Coco?

His wife wants him to recant; he gives her grand eloquent absolution.

Uses to hide a man. Says he does it out of foolishness.

Reins himself when asked only to recant (1. friend, the last).

Leitmotif: his rejection of the basic plane, as expressed in (a) (nocturnal) identification w. suffering (a refuse patient) - the underworld. Bring in Peter's promise? His guilt feeling? (b) ^{mystic (religious pain)} art. drug addiction (c) love as an absolute.

His counter-parts: (1) the cursed patients monthly lunch - the trivial plane in full bloom

(2) Margareta - architect

(3) the refugee (nocturnal) slaves

(4) his wife - needs charity

One of his patients becomes collabo-minister.